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HIRAM GREG

By

J. CROWTHER HIRST







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HIRAM GREG.

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J. CROWTHER HIRST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

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TO

MY WIFE,

WHO BEST KNOWS THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH

THEY WERE WRITTEN,

AND TO WHOM THEY WILL HAVE A MEANING

NOT CONTAINED IN THEIR PRINTED WORDS,

These Volumes

ARE DEDICATED.

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HIRAM GREG.



CHAPTER I.

A SUNDAY MORNING WALK, AND SOMETHING MORE.

“JUST one more, an’ then we mut move on,” said Hiram Greg. “Let th’ lasses pick. —Helen, what’s it to be?”

“ ‘ Before Jehovah’s,’ ” said Helen.

“ A’ reet. Now, together—

‘ Before Jehovah’s awful throne,
Ye nations bow with sacred joy,
Know that the Lord is God alone :
He can create, and He destroy.’ ”

And the stately hymn, sung to the tune of
“The Old Hundredth,” floated away upon
the fragrant morning air.

The scene was not one to be easily forgotten. About a score of young men and women, in pretty equal numbers, were seated on the shelving side of what in Lancashire is known as a "clough"—a small wooded valley. Through the fresh green foliage of the trees the sunlight fell in golden flakes upon the grass; the June breeze waved the long fronds of the ferns, making them rustle a soft accompaniment to the music of the hymn; and the same breeze caught up the perfume from the myriads of bluebells growing high up on the bank, and wafted it away to the distant town.

The young men and women seated on the ground, singing "The Old Hundredth" with all their heart and strength, looked romantic enough at a distance. So, indeed, did the narrow stream, winding along the bottom of the clough; for the newly-risen sun was blazing down upon it, imparting a

glory and a brightness which admirably harmonized with the wooded banks, the soft grass, the waving ferns, and the nodding bluebells. But if you approached the stream more nearly, you found that its waters were thick and discoloured, and you knew that polluting refuse was poured into it from a dyeworks or a fulling mill somewhere out of sight. And looking more closely at the individuals of which the group was composed you saw that distance had added picturesqueness to the view, and that they were not children of fortune and of luxury, but very ordinary and very commonplace. Their dress showed that they belonged to the working class ; three of them wore wooden-soled clogs ; the shawls which covered the shoulders of the girls were mostly faded ; one or two of the faces were pinched as if with actual want ; all were of the pale and sallow hue, which comes of long hours of hard work in a close

atmosphere, amid the buzz of machinery, and of the scanty living which was the best that could be procured with operatives' wages in those trying days.

Hiram Greg was the leading spirit of the little band. He chose the direction which their Sunday morning's walk should take; he selected the hymns they should sing, excepting when he thought well, as he had done on this particular morning, to allow others to exercise their discretion; and he usually led the conversation to subjects which he had thought well over, and on which he had something worth hearing to say.

When the last note of the music had died away, Hiram rose, and the rest followed his example.

"It must be after six o'clock," he said, "an' if we're going round by th' Delph we mut be moving."

Taking the hint, they began to ascend the

side of the clough by a winding path which led out to the Delph Moor. For a little way they kept close together, but, the path being narrow as well as steep, they soon broke into twos and threes; and as Hiram, contrary to his usual custom, was not to be seen in front, they straggled more and more as they neared the top of the hill.

Hiram lingered behind his companions, as if determined that they should out-distance him. Helen Briggs was with him, and every few yards he would stop to look at the stream shining in the bottom of the clough, or to draw her attention to an especially fine cluster of ferns, or to listen to some bird uttering its jubilant matin song. Presently those who had gone on in advance were all out of sight, and Helen and he were left alone.

"Just sit thi deawn here a bit, lass," he said, pointing to a large stone by the side of the path. "Tha looks teert."

"I don't feel teert particler," replied Helen.

But she seated herself, nevertheless. Hiram stood opposite to her for a minute, looking earnestly into her face. Then he turned to look at the path by which they had ascended, lifting his cloth cap with one hand and pushing back his hair with the other.

In figure he was hardly up to the middle height, but his broad shoulders and well-knit frame gave the idea of considerable strength and power of endurance. His head was well placed, and its erect carriage indicated a fearless and independent spirit. The full, dark eyes, shaded by long lashes, could either melt or flash according to the feeling of the moment; his hair was black, thick, and crisp, streaked here and there with a white hair, though Hiram was but twenty-two; bushy side whiskers of the same hue brought into relief the pallor of

the cheeks; the thin-lipped mouth and square, shaven chin were signs that a strong will and the faculty to form and keep a resolution, in spite of any opposition, were prominent features of his character.

Helen, sitting on the stone with her hands—hard and toil-stained hands—crossed on her lap and her eyes cast down, was a contrast to him in more respects than one. Several years his junior, she had, nevertheless, the pathetic air of a weak nature inured to premature hardship. Beneath the bands of her soft brown hair the blue veins showed in her temples and forehead. Large grey eyes, veiled by dark lashes, and arched brows of the same shade, were the chief beauty of the face. The mouth was well shaped, but the lips lacked colour, and there was about them a tremulous, uncertain movement indicative of hesitancy and want of will. Though in figure a woman, in the face there was much of the

child—a pleading, deprecating look, not without its charm for a strong and self-reliant nature like that of Hiram Greg.

“This is a steep path,” remarked the young man, reflectively.

“Ay, it’s steep enow,” said Helen, looking into his face.

“But,” continued Hiram, “it’s easier climbin’ if yo’ve someb’dy wi’ yo’. It soart o’ mak’s yo’ forget th’ way i’ what yo’ve gotten to talk abeaut.”

“Of course it does. I hate to go a walk by mysel’.”

“Yo’ do, Helen? Then yo’d rather ha’ me wi’ yo’ nor be left alone,” said Hiram, gravely.

“Yo’ know that, Hiram,” she replied, almost afraid and ready to cry, and playing with the fringe of her faded shawl to hide the emotion for which she would have found it difficult to account.

“But there’s mony a harder path nor this

to climb, Helen. Seems to me 'at th' life o' th' workin' folks i' these days is like scramblin' up th' face of a high rock full o' brokken points. They're a' wearin' an' toilin' to get to th' top. Some on 'em succeed, but it's wi' torn hands an' bleedin' feet, an', at last, they're fain to lay 'em deawn an' dee to get a bit o' rest. Some get up a little way, an' then turn sick an' faint, or they fall back'ards, an' get crushed, an' have to give in. We're tell't 'at life's a vale o' tears. I say it's a rocky mountain o' blood an' groans."

"What's th' matter, lad?" asked Helen, surprised and alarmed by the vehemence with which these words were uttered.

"I didn't mean to say that, lass," replied Hiram, smiling sadly and passing his hand across his forehead, as if to brush away unseasonable thoughts; "but when my mind turns on that subject it's a'most more nor I can stond."

"That's just what feyther says," said

Helen, "an' I get fair feart to hear him talk sometimes."

"Ay, he knows as much abeaut it as I do, an' someb'dy 'll ha' to be feart afore things mend. But, pleas' God, they'll mend i' time ; an' till they do we mut be as patient as we con."

Helen gave him a sad, almost hopeless smile. She felt her share of the pressure of the common misery ; and the long-borne burden had deprived her of some of the elasticity of spirit and expectancy of heart proper to her years. She rose from her seat, as if to continue her walk, but Hiram, laying a hand upon her shoulder, gently detained her.

"Yo' said, Helen," he began, speaking more slowly than usual, "'at yo'd rather ha' me wi' yo' nor be by yoursel'. Well, lass, we've both to climb th' rough hill o' life some gate. Happen it'll get less rough after a bit ; anyway, if we go together it'll seem

so. We're both young; an' I've made up my mind—*I've made up my mind*—'at I'll not always be as poor as I am neaw. If determination an' hard work con do it, I'll be better off some day. But I want someb'dy to share my prosperity when it comes, an' some hope to help me while it's comin'. Will tha chance goin' up th' hill wi' me, Helen? God knows I'll mak' thi as happy as I con, an' we'll share whativver joys an' divide whativver sorrows may be afore us. Mut we walk up th' hill together?"

"Ay," was all Helen could say. Here was hope; here was a strong arm on which to lean, and she lifted a face brighter than it had been for many a day to his. He took the face between his hands, looked into the large, childish eyes, and reverently kissed the tremulous lips.

"Then come," he said, "let us move on."

She placed her hand on his arm, and they went together up the side of the clough.

The rest of the party were quite out of sight, and even the words of conversation and the lines of hymns which Helen and Hiram had heard for some little time after they were left alone were heard no more. But the fact that they were not likely to overtake any of their companions did not seem to disturb them or cause them any anxiety.

“Stop one minute,” exclaimed Hiram, as he left her and strode rapidly into the wood, making a trail through the dewy ferns and bluebells. “Here,” said he, as he returned, holding some white hyacinths between his fingers, “here are some whitebells for thi. They ought to be lilies, Helen, but as we haven’t lilies we mut be content wi’ whitebells.”

“They’re just as pretty, Hiram.” And she pinned the flowers in the bosom of her dress.

Helen being expected at home not later

than seven o'clock, they walked on rapidly. They soon reached the brow of the clough, and saw stretching out before them a wild, undulating moor. On the right it rose in large, irregular brown billows, until, about a mile and a half away, it seemed to join the sky. On the left it fell gradually for a quarter of a mile, being bounded on that side by a few straggling houses and three or four fields of hungry-looking pasture-land. Still further away to the left might be seen more fields and houses, and, resting beneath a light canopy of smoke in the bottom of a long valley, of which the clough from which they had just emerged was a branch or arm, lay the town of Millvale. Its clustering houses, its great mills with their long tiers of windows and colossal chimneys, its churches with their square towers or taper spires—all seemed wrapped in the Sunday calm. Here and there a window, catching the morning sun, blazed as if a fire burnt behind it. No

buzz of labour broke the stillness ; no black volumes of smoke sullied the fresh June air or suggested the thought of unhealthy toil or work-worn operatives. For all that could be seen from where Hiram and Helen stood, the town might have been the home of peace and plenty, not the abode of want and misery and fierce discontent. Guarded by surrounding hills, it seemed to sleep with the benediction of Heaven resting visibly upon it.

Occupied with other thoughts—knowing the stern reality too well to appreciate the delusive beauty of the scene—the young couple did not pause to dwell upon the view before them ; but, striking into a track leading through the heather, gained the white road which divided the moor, and passing through the hamlet at its foot, were soon on their way home.

“Yo’ll be i’ time,” said Hiram.

“I hope so,” Helen replied.

"It can't be later nor a quarter to seven."

"If I'm hoam by seven it'll be soon enow. Yo' see there's breakfast to mak', an' th' childer to get ready for schoo', an' mother conno' do it a' hersel' wi'out bein' thrutted; an' if I weren't back i' time to help, feyther 'd say I mutn't come again."

"A' reet, lass, we'll step it."

They walked on briskly, and in a few minutes reached a thickly-populated part of the town. Coming to a street of small houses—

"Good-bye, lass, for th' present," said Hiram.

"Good-bye."

"I shall see thi at Heather Street," he continued, as if loth to part.

"Ay, I'st be at schoo'."

And she turned into her own home, while Hiram's firm tread made the pavement ring as he walked away.

CHAPTER II.

HEATHER STREET.

HEATHER Street Chapel—familiarily called by its frequenters Heather Street—was a square brick building, blackened by the smoke and dirt of Millvale. It had no architectural pretensions, and no beauty to attract the eye. Indeed, people without any affectionate prepossession in its favour would have pronounced it ugly. The chief entrance was by a door in the middle of the front, and on each side of this door was a single window with a round-arched top. A flagged pathway, leading from the door to the street, cut in two a dank graveyard, where the bodies of defunct worshippers

rested beneath discoloured stones or patches of lichen, the only vegetation which could be prevailed upon to grow in the centre of the town.

The interior of the building was little more attractive than the exterior. The walls were simply coloured with a plain yellow wash, and unrelieved by ornament. Round three sides a deep gallery ran, furnished with deep pews, shabbily-painted brown. The ground-floor had a pavement of flags, part of them being flat gravestones, and here were no pews, but only common wooden forms with ordinary school desks against the walls. The pulpit, approached by a flight of wooden steps, occupied that side of the building to which the gallery did not extend, and below it was a large pew for those who took the lead in the musical portion of the services.

Yet this plain, even ugly, structure was the object of very warm regard on the part

of those connected with it. The men who reared it belonged to a generation prior to that with which we have to do. Members of a large dissenting congregation in the town, they were shocked and pained beyond endurance by the hyper-calvinism of the preacher who was supreme in their time; and while he poured forth his hard and cruel logic they met quietly at each other's houses, read the Bible, prayed in simple fashion for light and guidance, discussed the dogmas of the minister, and compared them with the Sermon on the Mount, and finally resolved they would listen no more to the "high" doctrine which they had come to regard as loveless and untrue. They retired quietly, therefore, from their old spiritual home, and, as a band of brothers, without minister, with very shallow pockets, but with abundant faith and courage, continued to meet together to exhort and strengthen one another. At length, as their own children grew up or

outsiders joined them, they found the necessity of a building larger than any which they could command, and, by dint of hard work and no small amount of self-sacrifice, built the chapel now affectionately spoken of by their successors as Heather Street.

Here, then, the congregation met Sunday after Sunday for worship, chiefly occupying the pews in the gallery. The ground-floor was used for the Sunday School, and in this school many of those connected with Heather Street, at the date of our story, had received all the education they possessed. To teach in the school was a labour of love, and the school was the strength and the glory of Heather Street.

The people, as we have said, were not rich. It was enough for them to pay their ground rent, light, heating, and other such like expenses, without wasting money on work which they could do themselves. Consequently the members were divided

into relays, and took the duties of chapel-keeper in turns. Every Sunday morning, at five o'clock, you might have found a party of four or five men, dressed in the coarse clothes in which they went to the mill during the week, busy lighting the fire in the stove, sweeping, or even washing the floor, dusting the seats, seeing that the desks were supplied with ink, and making all other preparations for the proceedings of the day. When the work was done, the workers went home to breakfast, and to "fettle" themselves; in most cases re-appearing at nine o'clock, clad in their Sunday best, to help to teach the numerous lads and lasses who occupied the forms and desks.

The preaching, too, was shared in a similar manner, but among a more limited number, who were gifted with the power of speech.

But though Sunday was, of course, the great day of the week at Heather Street, it

was not by any means the only day on which its doors were opened. On Sundays, writing and arithmetic were taught, and this teaching was supplemented by night classes, conducted by men who often, after a long day of hard work in the mill, had difficulty in keeping awake. Then there was a debating society, where many strange theological, political, and social theories were broached, but where habits of thought and of ready expression were fostered; a singing class led by Hiram Greg, and composed chiefly of the persons who were out in the clough below the Delph Moor, with other classes and societies, which we need not particularize. We may add, however, that in addition to the regular meetings there were occasional concerts given by the musicians under Hiram's charge, and tea parties, when the women-folk, the speechmaking men, and the singers, shared the glories of the hour.

The daily life of the Heather Street people,

almost without exception, was one continuous fight with poverty. The hours of labour were fearfully long and the wages fearfully small. A poor, sparsely-furnished cottage, coarse and scanty food, were the utmost the majority of them could attain. With its stern cares and wearisome difficulties the life was a sordid and trying one ; yet they were no worse off than thousands upon thousands of English working men in the year of grace 1842. But the daily experience being so bleak, the Heather Street folks found far more in their grimy brick chapel than many more favoured mortals find in their noble gothic churches, with all their storied panes and rolling organ tones and mellifluent eloquence of white-robed priests. For Heather Street was not only the place where they found religious light and strength, but it was the place where thought was excited, where the tastes received the gratifications which such poor,

uncultured tastes were capable of receiving ; where, for a few hours each week at least, the strain, the toil, and sordidness of the common days could be forgotten, and the door opened which leads from this prosaic world into that ideal world, where larger interests broaden the mind and fairer forms enchant the sight, and where all men must enter sometimes if they are not to sink to the level of the brutes. To the Heather Street folks, in short, Heather Street was church and college, philosophical society and literary club, assembly and drawing-room, concert hall and theatre, all in one, and consequently occupied a very large share of their thoughts and affections.

It was the custom of some of the younger portion of this brotherhood and sisterhood to meet early on the Sunday morning for a long walk among the hills and valleys, by which Millvale was surrounded ; and on these expeditions, more than one match was

made between the young folks ; and thus an additional link was forged to bind both the contracting parties to the society which brought them together, and to the place where they first became acquainted.

The buzz of voices and the pattering of feet, which accompany the gathering of any number of children together, was at its height ; the teachers were laying ready their piles of class books ; the superintendent was putting out the school roll and the bell with which he rang for order, when Hiram entered. He cast a hasty glance to the girls' side, where several young women had already collected, but Helen had not arrived, and his eyes fell.

"Hiram," said the superintendent.

"Well, Schofield."

"I want thee to oppen schoo' this mornin'. I've gotten to preach. Doctor Wood's laid up."

"A' reet. What's th' matter wi' Doctor ?"

“He’s gotten th’ tooth-warch, an’ he looks as if he’d tried to swallow a doorknob an’ it’d stuck in his cheek.”

“It’s noan wi’ o’er exercising his teeth, ony gate, poor fellah!” said Hiram, somewhat bitterly.

“Neaw, lad; he’s like th’ rest on us—noan i’ much danger o’ gettin’ a complaint i’ that’n.”

Doctor Wood held no diploma, and his titular designation was only his Christian name, conferred upon him by his parents in conformity with the common Lancashire custom of bestowing titles such as Squire, Earl, Lord, and others, instead of the more ordinary appellations such as John and Thomas.

“Will tha ha’ to preach this afternoon?” asked Hiram.

“Neaw, thank goodness! I’ve been to tell Mester Stapleton ’at we’re in a fix, an’ he said he’d gi’e us a sarmon this afternoon,

if I'd manage this morning. But it's time to begin."

The superintendent rang his bell, and, when silence was obtained, gave out a hymn. This was sung heartily by all present, and then Hiram offered prayer. As he thanked God for the blessings given, there was a ring of heartiness and sincerity in his tone, springing from the joy that had come to him a few hours ago; and, as he pleaded for help, it seemed as if he were mastered by the idea of the great prevailing want, imaged to him by the rows of pinched faces which he saw before him as clearly as if his eyes were wide open.

The classes began work in earnest; but Hiram's roving eye could not discover Helen Briggs; and the youths whom he had in charge found him less alert and watchful than usual.

Time for service came; the school-books were put aside; the people began to fill up

the pews in the gallery ; and Schofield Dawson ascended the pulpit. Hiram sat with his lads, to keep them in order, and consequently could not see who was in the gallery above. But he felt certain that Helen was there ; and, consoling himself with the thought of seeing her at the close of the service, prepared to attend as closely to Dawson's ministrations as his lads would allow.

Had Doctor Wood, the appointed preacher of the day, officiated, it is possible that little or nothing of the privations and needs, the hopes and fears, which filled the air, and in which all members of the working classes more or less shared, would have come to the surface in his words. He was a keen theologian, and frequently treated his hearers to a long argument in disproof of some doctrine of the Calvinism which he had abandoned ; and as his hearers, to begin with, were in entire accord with his opinions, his dis-

courses were considered masterpieces of unanswerable reasoning. But Schofield Dawson was no theologian, excepting so far as a feeling heart and a good stock of shrewd common-sense made him one. So in prayer and sermon what was uppermost in the minds of all found a voice ; and throughout there was a truth to the life and experience of all which amply compensated for the polemical logic conspicuous by its absence, and also for the uncouth dialect which was Schofield's natural speech, and which he made no effort to hide.

The subject of his address was the parable of the workers in the vineyard, which he treated in a remarkably free, familiar, and discursive style.

"Human natur'," he said in one place, "is pretty much t' same wherever yo' look. Men vally ther'sels at a big figger, an' when they get what they agree for they're hardly content. These fellahs had had a day's

pleasant work in a vineyard, not such work as we ha' to do i' a mill full o' buzzin' machinery an' bad air; natur, wi' all her beauties, were spread out afore 'em; yet when they went to t' steward for their wages an' got a' they'd bargained for, out o' pure envy, they grumbled 'cause others were as well off as the'rsels."

And again: "I don't know just what a penny were worth; but it were a good deal more nor a English penny. An' then livin' were much cheaper then nor it is neaw. So we may be sure 'at a day's wage were equal to a day's meat. But they were na content! O, friends, what 'd we say to wages 'at'd keep famine out o' our houses! We know what it is to see wives an' little uns growin' paler an' thinner day after day, an' to hear 'em askin' for more bread when there is none left; an' we think 'at if we could only have enough for them an' oursels we'd be perfectly happy. Well, th' day may come when bad

laws 'll be swept away, an' when him as 'll work 'll be able to eat, an' we'll all do our best to bring that day on. But till then, O, brothers and sisters, fellow-labourers an' fellow-sufferers, let us be as patient as we can. Don't let us blame the Lord for bad men's doin's. He said, 'Give to *every* man a penny;' an' it's not the Lord 'at's hard on us. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' An' i' these bitter days let us prepare for th' better day that will come—ay, it will come, because the Lord reigneth—so that we may not find fau't when we get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, because the wages don't come wi'out work."

The service ended in due course, and the congregation dispersed, making many remarks on Dawson's sermon on the way home. But Helen was not among the little crowd; and Hiram, who, it must be confessed, thought more about her than about the sermon, was obliged to go home wondering and disappointed.

CHAPTER III.

MR. STAPLETON.

AFTERNOON came and still Helen was absent from her usual place. At three o'clock the second service of the day began, and Mr. Stapleton, true to his promise, appeared to speak to the Heather Street people.

Mr. Stapleton was the minister of another congregation in the town, and, being a large-hearted, as well as a strong-limbed, man, he found time and strength to help others besides those of his own particular flock. His own flock, indeed, was composed almost exclusively of well-to-do people, who were quite satisfied if their minister preached to them and attended their parties, christened

their children, and buried their dead, and who did not wish to be disturbed in their easy respectability by any enthusiasm. Not being numerous, they left their strong-bodied and warm-souled parson a good stock of spare energy and sympathy for those who needed them more. The Heather Street folks had attracted him by their self-sacrifice and earnestness. He enjoyed their piquant candour, he pitied the hardness of their lives, and their heresies he looked upon as evidence of their independence and love of truth. So he helped and encouraged them, by preaching for them sometimes in the afternoon—a time of day when he had no other engagement—by visiting their sick, and in various other ways. In return they regarded him with a grateful love, amounting almost to reverence, and with a respect bordering upon worship.

In person, as he stood in the pulpit, he was a noble-looking man. About his tall

and muscular figure there was nothing of the conventional dissenting parson. His dress bore no trace of the clerical cut, and in his behaviour the man was more prominent than the minister. His head was massive and well set, covered with a plentiful crop of iron-grey hair, the brow broad and furrowed ; grey eyes, a nose large but not classic in outline, a large, flexible mouth with white and regular teeth, made up the features of a closely-shaven face. But the beauty of the face—as of every face that is more than a doll’s face—was in its expression. A countenance that changes so readily with every change of feeling as did Mr. Stapleton’s is rarely seen. When he smiled his whole aspect was brightened. Schofield Dawson once remarked that Mr. Stapleton reminded him of one of the hilly moors which are so plentiful about Millvale. “Sometimes,” he said, “a moor covered wi’ heather looks quiet, an’ solemn, an’ stern ;

but while you look th' sun breaks through,
an' it seems as if th' glory o' heaven were
brightening it. An' his face is rough enow,
and solemn enow sometimes, an' then it just
brightens all over, an' becomes so beautiful
it makes yo' glad to look. It fair seems as
if God were smilin' into his eyes, an' he were
smilin' back !”

In speaking he made little show of being
an orator, but he had the rare faculty of
simple Saxon speech, and a vein of quiet
humour. He was, in fact, a natural orator,
his power being shown in the influence he
could exert over the feelings of his audience
and the music he could awaken in rough,
ingenuous souls such as those of the Heather
Street folks.

When he descended from the pulpit,
Hiram formed one of a little crowd who
gathered round him to shake him by the
hand.

“Are you at liberty for a little while ?”

asked Mr. Stapleton, turning to Hiram after a few words with each of the others.

"Yes, for a little while. I thought of going—" Hiram hesitated.

"I want a few minutes' conversation with you."

"All right, sir."

When they reached the street Mr. Stapleton asked—

"Which way did you intend to go?"

"To Grove Street first. After that—"

"To Grove Street—to the Briggs'?"

"Yes."

"I have not seen old Mr. Briggs for some time, so I will walk round with you. I want to have a bit of talk about the doings of your political friends. You are on the Chartist committee, I think?"

"I am, and we have a meetin' this afternoon."

"I hear that it is likely trouble will arise shortly with you. Of course, every

man has a right to his opinions, but it seems to me that you are making a great mistake in treating the corn law repealers as enemies. If you succeed in the long run, as some of you begin to be more confident of doing, and if the six points of the Charter become part of the law of the land, I cannot see how the condition of the working classes will be perceptibly improved. You will have political power, it is true, and may get rid of some offensive laws. But freedom, though it leaves room for growth, does nothing more—it does not change the nature of the seed or the plant, it does not alter the characters of men in a moment. A fool when he gets a vote is a fool still, and an improvident man is improvident still ; and an electoral district in which the power was in the hands of ignorant, thoughtless, or selfish people would act ignorantly, thoughtlessly, or selfishly in its collective capacity. Wealth will not be increased by giving a

vote to each grown man ; and I fear, I very much fear," said Mr. Stapleton, reflectively, " that many of you are expecting far too much as a result of compliance with your demands. But I can see that great relief might come if the iniquitous corn laws were swept from the face of the earth ; if our rulers would permit the bread which God has sent upon the earth in plenty for all to enter our ports, so that the money which now is barely enough to sustain life would be equal to providing for a fair degree of comfort. It is monstrous that the masses should slave for the purpose of filling the pockets of a few ! But, dear me, I have run away from what I really wanted to say. I hear that it is proposed to renew the agitation for the sacred month ? "

" It is, Mr. Stapleton."

" And how is the proposition received ? "

" To tell th' truth we're divided. It's happen not fair to talk to a—well, you *are* an

outsider—to an outsider—about what passes i' t' committee ; but I may say as much as that we're split i' two on that point. Some think 'at to stop work throughout all t' country for a month would ruin it an' us, if we could live so long. Others are ready to risk all."

"And which side do you take ?"

"What I consider t' side o' reason. I shall oppose this move wi' all my might."

"That's right. I'm glad to hear that. Do those who urge it," continued the minister, uttering his thought aloud rather than addressing his hearer, "Do those who urge it think of what the result may be—of what the result *must* be—of turning thousands and thousands of hungry, exasperated men loose, and leaving them idle for a whole month ? If this mad idea were to be carried into effect, do you suppose peaceful counsels would prevail ? The destruction of property, the riot and bloodshed of the past would

be repeated with a hundred aggravations ; the country would be swept by a mad, but helpless wave of revolution ; while the guns of English soldiers would be turned against English breasts, and the swords which ought only to be drawn to protect us from foreign foes would be imbrued in the blood of our countrymen. The idea turns one cold with horror ! ”

“ Ay, that’s true. But yo’ might as well talk to a stone wall as to some o’ th’ fellahs on our committee. They’re just mad—partly wi’ ther own sufferin’s an’ th’ sight o’ others’ sufferin’s ; partly wi’ speeches they’d walk any distance to hear made by th’ leaders o’ th’ physical force party.”

“ Well, do your best, Hiram ; do your best. ‘ Angels could no more.’ You’re but young, my lad, to be sharing in this great movement for political freedom ; but if you help to moderate the counsels of the rash and foolish, it will be a happy memory which will last you all your life.”

CHAPTER IV.

WIRE-PULLERS.

WHEN Mr. Stapleton and his companion entered the little house occupied by Isaac Briggs and his family, Hiram naturally looked round for Helen, but she was not to be seen. The only people present were Mrs. Briggs, familiarly known as Betty, and Mr. Briggs, senior, Helen's grandfather.

Mrs. Briggs was a tightly-made little woman, with a red and wrinkled face, a snub nose, a pair of dark, keen eyes, and thick black hair, coarse in fibre, and streaked here and there with grey. Like most women with a dash of the virago in their constitution, she was an excellent manager, and proud of her house, though it was by no

means possessed of any grandeur to evoke such a feeling. The lower storey consisted of the general living room, or "house place," and a small scullery behind, and over these there were two bedrooms corresponding in size. The furniture of the house place was meagre—a round table, supported on three legs, four wooden chairs, a table with drawers beneath the window, a large armchair, occupied by the grandfather, and covered with some kind of faded fabric, and a mysterious article which might be taken for a large box or a chest of drawers, but which was in fact the closed bedstead in which old Mr. Briggs slept. The house and its contents, however, like Mrs. Briggs herself, were spotlessly clean, and the odd couple of brass candlesticks on the mantel shone as brightly as when new. "Elbow grease is cheap," was one of her familiar sayings, and it was an article of which she was by no means sparing in polishing her household treasures.

The old man, in his roomy chair, was a very feeble, shrunken creature. He was thin when his clothes were made for him, but they now hung loose about his attenuated limbs. His face, surmounted by a scanty crop of thin grey hair, and fringed by whiskers to match, was sallow in hue, and deeply ploughed by the lines of age. There was a weak movement of the lips and a wandering expression in the eye, which plainly declared that his mental faculties of thought and memory were impaired. Like other old people, he remembered the events of his early days more distinctly than those of yesterday, and, in his poor mind, the remote and the recent were often strangely confused. Sometimes he would babble for a whole morning, smiling and rubbing his hands the while, of green fields and sweet flowers and a running stream, uttering names which were forgotten by all in the world but himself, and they knew that he was dream-

ing of the old, old days when he lived in a Cheshire village, and when he broke into a gentle cry, and a weak laugh crackled in his throat, they knew that he was a child again at play with other children long since scattered to the four quarters of the globe, and almost all now passed from the earth for ever. Suddenly he would lift his hand to his brow, and realizing where he was, would mutter, with a sigh, "They're gone, gone! But it's only for a little while, a little while!" By-and-by he would again sink into forgetfulness of the present, and complain bitterly that his brother Jacob had been carried off to fight against the rebels in America, and hope that the revolution would be crushed, oblivious of the fact that the rebels had established a great nation now close upon half a century old. Then, as if one thought brought on another, he would talk of his wife and their little ones, and of the boy who became a soldier, like his uncle,

and fell on the field of Waterloo ; and soon the old man would wipe his eyes and lose all consciousness in sleep.

But though his mental powers were thus clouded by the mists of years, in reference to one subject his mind seemed as alert and his memory as faithful as ever. In his hard struggling life he had known fully the consolations of religion, and still his faith was as vigorous, his trust as complete, as in his manhood's prime. Always on a Sunday, as well as at other times, he would repeat passages from the gospels, the epistles, and the psalms—particularly the psalms most applicable to his time of life ; and while his mind was thus employed, the trembling weakness of the lips disappeared, the eyes lost their wandering, aimless look, and a smile full of deep joy and confidence lit his aged face.

“ Well, Mrs. Briggs,” said Mr. Stapleton, as she let him in, “ how are you getting on ? ”

"Gradely, Mester Stakelton, gradely. There's folks gets on better, but we pays our way an' keeps our sperits up."

"Mr. Briggs is not at home?" remarked Mr. Stapleton, interrogatively.

"Nor Helen?" added Hiram.

"Neaw, noather Isaac nor Helen. Isaac's off to th' committee meetin'—more foo' he! an' Helen's gone up to Birk's Cottage a lookin' at Bridget and Molly Fry. Poor wench!" sighed Mrs. Briggs, as she dusted a chair with her apron for the minister, and pointed to another as an invitation to Hiram.

"Is aught th' matter?" asked Hiram, hastily.

"Ay, matter enow, lad."

"Nothing seriously wrong, I hope?"

"That depends heaw yo' look at it, Mr. Speckleton. When Helen came home this morn' I thought th' child looked happier an' brighter nor usual, but feyther seemed more out o' sorts nor usual. Why, he were short

an' snappy wi' th' old mon here, and that isna his way a bit. Then Helen seemed to get flustered an' narvous, an' oo couldn't do naught 'at he didna find fau't wi'. At last he set to an' gave her a downreet wiggin', an' oo cried at his hard words, an' that seemed to make him mad. Then he began to talk agin t' chapel—not 'at he's aught agin Heather Street special—but he said 'at aw religion's tieranny, though I can't see what he means ; an' 'at a' priests is joined hand-i'-hand wi' them 'at oppresses poor fowk ; an' 'at religion's nobbut a way o' frightenin' fowk, an' keepin' 'em deawn. We said naught, an' let him talk ; but when he up an' said Helen shouldna go ony more to Heather Street I couldna keep quiet, an' I up an' told him a bit o' my mind. But, bless yo', it does no good to talk to a mon when he's mad. It only made Ike more set upo' havin' his own gate. So Helen had to bide at home this morn', an' I sent her up to

Birk's Cottage this afternoo'. I can't tell where Ike's gotten all his queer idees abeaut rich fowks' wickedness, an' religion, an' dividin' property, an' votes, an' aw that'n. I 'xpect he's picked 'em up amang them Socialists, an' Chartists, an' that lot. But he's noan a bad soart o' mon, Ike isna, an' he'll come reet i' time ; an' happen afore next Sunday he'll take back a' he's said to Helen."

The good woman paused for breath ; and Hiram, who had listened to her narrative with considerable indignation, fidgetted uneasily in his chair.

"That's the right view to take," said Mr. Stapleton.

"O' coorse it is," chimed in the old man.
"Betty's a gradely wife."

"Feyther were listenin', yo' see," said Mrs. Briggs, proudly.

"Ay, ay," continued the old man ; "Ike's a strong will an' a hot temper, Jane, an' th'

lad mut be carefully trettet, for he's good at th' bottom ; an' his mother 'll be proud on him one day, oo will, I know."

"He thinks he's talkin' to Ike's mother neaw," explained Mrs. Briggs, with a touch of awe in her tone.

"I came to read for you," said Mr. Stapleton, turning to old Mr. Briggs, and raising his voice.

"Ay, ay, Jane—no, it isna Jane—Betty, lass, get th' Bible."

"You'll excuse me," said Hiram, rising, "but I've to attend that committee meetin'. Will Helen have her tea wi' Bridget and Molly Fry?"

"I 'xpect so."

"Then I'll just ca' in there after th' meetin'."

And Hiram left the house.

He soon reached the room where the committee of the local Chartist association held its meetings. It was situated in a yard

behind some of the shops in Broadshire Street, the principal street in the town, and was approached by a flight of stone steps outside the wall. The members of the association were chiefly very poor men, and a costly room for their meetings they could not afford. They therefore gladly accepted the offer of a sympathizer to lend them this apartment, and bore the smell which proceeded from the stable below, counting it a small evil compared with others which they had to endure.

The room was low, ill-ventilated, and badly lighted, and very gaunt and fierce looked the score men lounging in groups or sitting on the benches around the table when Hiram entered. He spoke to two or three, nodded to others, and took his seat at the table. He was without doubt the youngest man present; but he had won his place on the committee by his interest in the cause, his mental superiority to the

majority of his class, and his ability as a public speaker—a faculty exercised and strengthened in the meetings frequent at Heather Street.

Mr. Briggs sat not far from Hiram, his elbows on the table, and his face resting between the palms of his hands, discussing some point with bitter vigour with a fellow committee-man, who was seated opposite. Mr. Briggs, though taller than Hiram, was not above the middle height; dark hair covered his head and straggling whiskers fringed his face, which was of an unhealthy, greyish hue. His face was short, the low, broad forehead being lined with transverse wrinkles, conveying the idea that the head had been pressed down into a smaller space than nature originally intended it to occupy. Small, deeply-set eyes glanced sharply from beneath the thick brows, which overhung them like eaves of ragged thatch; and the mouth, thin and long, was drawn sideways,

in a curious fashion, every time he jerked out one of his pungent sentences.

When the time for commencing the meeting arrived, the chairman, a middle-aged person, with the appearance of a clerk, or poor schoolmaster, rapped on the table with his knuckles and the members took their seats. After some formal business had been transacted, the chairman rose, and spoke as follows :—

“As you are all aware, this is an ordinary meeting, and there is nothing particular to occupy our attention or calling for immediate decision. But as we are come together, I would suggest that we informally discuss a question that we shall be obliged to deal with, and deal with vigorously, at no distant date. You know that at the convention of representative Chartists, held in London in 1839, it was proposed that the people should be recommended to cease to labour until the demands of the Chartists were complied

with. I may remind you that great difference of opinion on the question existed at the time, both among members of the convention and among outsiders. On the recommendation of a committee, consisting of the illustrious O'Connor—(applause)—O'Brien—(more applause)—Meeson, Lowery, and Fletcher, the convention drew back, and the idea of a sacred month came to nothing at the time. But though no recommendation was made to the people to cease to toil until their rights were recognized, the men—shall I say the tyrants?—(cries of 'Yes!') the men in power were struck with fear or goaded to revenge, by the fact that the down-trodden people should think of asserting their right; and we know how O'Connor and Vincent, and other champions of liberty were treated by the cravens who wish Englishmen to labour like slaves to serve their greed and ambition. Well, these are things of the past, though we shall not for-

get them to our dying day. We were crushed by persecution for a while, but our oppressors will find that we will not be crushed for ever, and that, when the united people rise in their might, no self-elected Parliament, no queen, backed though they may be by a hireling army, for which we have to pay, will be able to withstand their power. We have petitioned so far in vain ; no ear is lent to our cry. Are we to rest content with things as they are ? ('No, no !') You would not be here if that were your opinion. But what are we to do ? Some of the Manchester men are talking again of the sacred month — (applause from the greater part of the meeting) — and we may very well occupy ourselves by talking over in a quiet way what we ought to recommend to those who look to us for guidance if this proposition is revived. I did not intend making a speech, and shall now be glad to have your views on the subject."

The men looked one at another as if each would ascertain his neighbour's thoughts before expressing his own. After a moment's hesitation Mr. Briggs rose and was greeted with signs of approval. Sweeping the assembly with his keen, sunken eyes, and placing his palms upon the table, he began :

“I should think, Mester Chairman, 'at ther' cannot be two opinions i' this meetin' on t' subject yo've browt afore us. (Cries of 'Hear, hear,' and 'There is.') Some'dy says ther' is, but I hope there's no traitors i' our camp. We're livin' under tyrants, an' we've tried hard to get rid o' the'r tieranny wi'out success. But we'll attempt it again an' again till we do succeed. It'll be a hard job. We mut expect that. There's kings an' a' the'r hangers on again' us—paupers ivvery one!—an' they'll try to keep us deawn. When we poor fowks becomes paupers they sell a' our bits o' duds, looms,

an' tools, an' a'—('shame!')—an' when they've gotten as much as they con they separate husband an' wife; an' happen th' priest as wed 'em looks on wi' a greasy smile while them 'at he said God had joined are by men put asunder. (Cheers, and cries of 'Shame!') An' how do they excuse this tre'tment? They say 'at a pauper race mutn't be increased. Now, what's sauce for th' goose is sauce for th' gander; and what's reet for one pauper is reet for another. What about th' royal family—Aren't they paupers? Do they hinder them from increasing th' breed? But, then, yo' see, they live i' palaces, instead o' th' Bastile; an' on th' principle 'at a mon as kills one is ca'd a murderer, but one 'at kills ten thousand is ca'd a glorious conqueror, paupers 'at costs little is ca'd paupers, but paupers 'at costs nob'dy knows how much is ca'd princes an' nobles." (Applause and laughter.)

The chairman here interposed with a re-

minder that Isaac was wandering from the point under discussion. Mr. Briggs smiled grimly and jerked out from his sideways mouth—

“A’ reet, lad; but that’s noan th’ unpardonable sin. If yo’ read th’ speeches o’ members o’ parliament yo’ll see ’at I’m nob-but followin’ a good example. Howiver, I have na’ mich more to say. But for one I’m gradely glad ’at this notion o’ stoppin’ work throughout a’ th’ land has come up again, an’ when th’ time comes I shall vote for ca’ing a mass meetin’ an’ tellin’ th’ Millvale fowk to join wi’ others i’ refusin’ to work till reet is done.”

Two others spoke in advocacy of the view taken by Isaac Briggs; and it began to appear as if no difference or dissent was to be expressed. Hiram, however, having waited in vain for some other person to take his side in the discussion, rose and began to speak in a low measured tone.

“I’m a young mon,” he commenced, “an’ happen some on yo’ may think it’s presumption i’ me to put forrard an opposite opinion to that maintained by older men.”

The meeting stared; and Isaac Briggs twisted restlessly on his seat and jerked out an impatient “pish!”

“But,” continued Hiram, unmoved, “though I may be thought presumptuous, I hope no one will think or ca’ me a traitor on account o’ this difference. To me it seems as if it ’d be abeaut th’ most disastrous thing ’at could happen if we could persuade fowk to leave the’r work; an’ this bein’ so, I should be a traitor not to say it.”

“Good lad, Hiram!” shouted an elderly man who had not yet spoken. “Go on, spit it out.” Thus encouraged, Hiram proceeded.

“This is a big question, an’ I’m glad we’ve gotten a chance at it afore we have to decide it, so ’at we can consider it well an’

avoid mistakes. Neaw, there are one or two things pretty sure to follow a general stoppage o' work. If we Chartists agree to stop an' others keep on our end wouldn't be gained. To be successful we mut prevail upo' a' th' workin' fowk to stand still. Con we do this? If not are we to force 'em to stop work because we think they ought? ('Ay!' from Isaac Briggs. 'No!' from the elderly man.) If we do this don't we turn oppressors? Then we should get a lot o' fowk into trouble, as th' chairman reminded us had been th' case afore, an' though we may risk our own necks if we pleas', it's another thing to get a lot o' men 'at's haulf wild wi' want, an' too ignorant to see consequences, into a situation o' peril. Hundreds an' thousan's of excited idle fowk means disturbances an' riots, an' i' th' end it comes to a question whether we mean to feight or try to carry our point by peaceable means. I say let us consider a' these things, an' not

rush blindly into a course o' action which we might bitterly rue too late."

Hiram sat down and two or three clapped in approval. The discussion became more desultory ; and the meeting shortly separated.

"Well, thou art a chicken-hearted piece," said Isaac Briggs, going up to Hiram outside the room.

"Don't let's have any hard words," Hiram replied, anxious, for reasons of his own, to conciliate Mr. Briggs. "We both want to do what's the best for th' cause."

"Best for th' cause !" sneered Isaac. "A deal tha knows abeaut it, or cares abeaut it oather ! I've done wi' thee !"

And Mr. Briggs walked away, leaving Hiram standing in a not very enviable frame of mind, at the foot of the flight of stone steps.

CHAPTER V.

BIRK'S COTTAGE.

HIRAM did not stand long. He could think as well walking as standing still, and walking would bring him nearer to Helen.

Birk's cottage, the residence of Miss Bridget Fry and her sister Maria, was a small, old-fashioned house, with long, low, latticed windows, and a porch over the front door covered with roses and honeysuckle. It was surrounded by a garden of a quarter of an acre, and was approached from the street by a wicket and a neatly-kept path. Its occupants were quite in keeping, in point of size and neatness, with their dwelling. Miss Fry was a little woman, generally

clothed in a closely-fitting brown dress ; her face was large in proportion to her body ; her hair grey and thin ; and her cap on a Sunday afternoon was decorated with one or two highly-coloured artificial flowers. As she walked with a sort of hopping movement, she reminded one irresistibly of a bantam fowl with a brilliant comb. Years ago she had given up all idea of changing her name and condition, and was not in the least offended when spoken of as an old maid.

Her sister Maria, or Molly as she was called, was taller and stouter. Being the junior by several years, she still considered herself a young person, though, if the truth must be told, her age was nearer fifty than forty. Her hair was not unmixed with grey threads, and there were lines about the corners of her eyes which would have made deception with respect to her age impossible in everybody's case but her own. In manner, as became her comparative youth, she was

more lively and demonstrative than Bridget, and while Miss Fry would sit silent and contemplative for a long time, Molly seemed to have no power to restrain her tongue.

The two were, indeed, a pair of rather faded old maids ; but behind their condition of single-blessedness there was a story of faithfulness and self-sacrifice, as there is behind so many old maid's lives. Lancashire women, with little education and nothing romantic about them, they had warm true hearts, too simple for guile, too good for anything but the most admirable integrity. Where they loved, their trust and devotion knew no limit ; where they hated—and they were, in their way, good haters—they said the bitterest things either to or of the object of their dislike ; and with beautiful inconsistency, if the condemned individual fell into sickness or trouble, they helped and tended him as readily as if he were a brother, making all the while defiant excuses for their

conduct, as if they were doing a grievous wrong.

To match their cottage and their persons, their means were small, and they eked out their scanty income by taking in a lodger, who occupied the best parlour and the bedroom above. Fortunate was the young fellow who was "taken in" by them! As long as he remained with them it was the chief aim of their life to anticipate his every wish, if they liked him; if they did not like him they speedily gave him notice to quit. And when a lodger who had won their hearts moved away or married, they still watched him with the liveliest interest; and it was one of the greatest pleasures of their innocent hearts to receive an occasional call from one of the persons who had for a time occupied their best parlour and their thoughts.

At the precise time of which we write their rooms chanced to be vacant, and when

Hiram arrived he found the two spinsters and Helen at tea in the inner sanctuary. The windows were open, and the fragrance of a bed of wall flowers was borne in on the June breeze.

"Come an' sit deawn, an' have a cup o' tea," said Miss Fry, smiling placidly as Hiram entered.

"I should ha' thought yo'd ha' been i' a greater hurry to come," remarked the sprightly Molly, giving a little laugh and looking meaningly from one of the young people to the other.

Helen blushed to the roots of her hair, and stirred her tea more than was necessary. Hiram felt and looked awkward.

"Take no notice o' Molly," said the elder sister. "We know a' abeaut it, lad, an' it's a' reet. Helen's tell't us, an' we're reet glad, are na' we, Molly?" and the old lady's eyes were bright with tears of sympathy.

"It's nought to us," responded Molly,

trying to smile, and making a pretence that a crumb in her throat had made her eyes water.

"It puts me i' mind o' when Mester Henderson were engaged to Miss Wharton. It were just afore he left here to go an' live nearer th' mill, an' he came in one neet an' tell't me of it, sitting' i' that very cheer." And Miss Fry pointed to an armchair standing near the hearth.

"An' he brought Miss Wharton here to see us one day after he left," struck in Molly; "an' a fine lass oo is. Oo seemed to *fill* this parlour, oo's so tall, an' her eyes are beautiful—big an' brown. An', though her feyther is mayor, oo's as free an' friendly as con be."

"I wonder when they're thinking o' gettin' wed?" said Bridget.

"I don't know," Molly answered. "Let's see, how long is it sin' Mester Henderson were here?"

"Two months, quite. But then, sin' he's been taken in partner wi' Mester Wharton, an' gotten engaged, he hasna' so mich time to come a lookin' at thee an' me."

"Not likely," replied Molly.

During this dialogue between the sisters, which they had got up with a direct view to the result, Helen and Hiram had regained their composure, and the latter had made good progress with the tea and bread and butter.

When the table was cleared and the two sisters returned from the kitchen (whither they retired for half an hour, under the pretence of washing up the tea things, a piece of work they could have accomplished in ten minutes had they chosen), Hiram related what had taken place at the committee meeting.

"Don't fret abeaut it," said Miss Fry, quietly. "Does onybody besides us know 'at thee an' Helen have made it up?"

"I've tell't nob'dy else."

"An' I've not mentioned it," added Helen.

"That's reet," Miss Fry resumed. "'A still tongue makes a wise head,' as Mr. Henderson used to say to Molly."

"Nay, it werena' Mester Henderson," cried the younger sister, "it were Mester Charlton, the one as lived here afore him. An' he used to say it to me as if he thought *I* were i' danger o' talkin' too mich!"

"Well, it doesna' matter which it were," said Bridget. "It's a' th' same, an' it'll be th' best just to keep quiet. Thy tongue runs away wi' thee sometimes, Molly, but tha' mut keep it still this time."

"My tongue!" exclaimed the accused spinster. "Tha ought to be ashamed o' thyself, Bridget, to say sich a thing. If nob'dy had no more to say nor me there wouldna be so mich trouble made as there is. My tongue!" And she tossed her

head indignantly, looking the part of injured innocence to the best of her ability.

Miss Fry's eyes twinkled with amusement. She knew she had touched her sister's weak point.

"Mr. Charlton," she said, "used to think tha needed a caution, an' so did Mester Henderson, an' Mester Morris, an' Mester Skinner."

"They knew nought abeaut it," said Molly, smiling in spite of herself.

"But we'll say no more o' that subject," the elder lady proceeded. "Yo're i' no hurry to get wed. Yo're both young enow to wait. I don't believe i' long engagements as a rule, for if folks ha' made up their minds where's th' use o' waitin'?"

"No," broke in Molly, "some fowk thinks 'at a young man should wait till he's gotten as good a home to take a lass to as that he takes her from; but I think nought o' that notion. If oo's worth her saut oo'll be glad

to go to th' best he con give her, an' help him to make it better. It's nought for fowk 'at reckons to love one another to let th' want of a bit of finery keep 'em apart for months and years, waitin' an' workin' separate, when they might be together, him earnin' an' her savin', an' cheerin' one another a' along. Ther's a good deal more pleasure i' beginnin' wi' just bare necessaries an' gettin' bits o' things after just as yo' con afford, nor i' th' lass goin' an' finding everything i' spick an' span order. When yo've felt th' want of a thing an' worked together to get it, yo' enjoy it a heap more nor if yo'd nivver known th' need on it."

"Yo' talk as if yo'd gone through it all," said Hiram, smiling.

"Happen so," replied Molly, blushing' as if she were still a girl; "an' if I have na gone through it mysel', I've seen 'em 'at has; an' I keep my eyes oppen, an' my ears an' a'."

"An' thy mouth," put in Miss Fry.

"Well, what's th' use o' larnin' things if yo' keep 'em a' to yoursel'?" retorted Molly. "That's th' way Mr. Charlton did when he left us to get wed, an' I hope Mester Henderson 'll do th' same."

"As yo' can wait," said Bridget, reverting to her point, "I'd advise yo' to say nought to nob'dy at present; an' if Isaac is awk'ard neww he'll come straight i' time."

"I wish politics were far enough," Molly struck in again. "They're nought but a bother. Fowk fratch abeaut 'em almost as mich as abeaut religion. If yo' don't happen to agree yo' go an' argie, an' argie, an' nivver get a bit nearer; at ony rate, I nivver knew one mon convince another 'at he were wrong yet, wi' a' th' argification they'n had; an' both Mester Skinner an' Mester Charlton were great politicians, an' the'r friends used to come here of a neet an' discuss things so earnest yo'd ha' thought they'd nivver ha'

spokken friendly again. As for Isaac, he's a foo'—— ”

“Molly!” exclaimed Miss Fry, warningly.

“I don't care!” said Molly, defiantly, “I'll say my say. This is a free country, an' if I think a thing I may as well out wi' it; an' he is a foo' if he makes a quarrel wi' Hiram 'cause they don't hit it i' the'r politics. I hate a mon 'at can't let another have his say wi'out makin' bad blood; specially a mon like Isaac, 'at says aw are equal and there ought to be no oppression.”

“Feyther's hasty and hot-tempered,” said Helen, “but he's a kind heart if yo' con get at it, an' he doesna bear malice.”

“That's just it,” said Bridget, with satisfaction; “when this bit of excitement's o'er he an' Hiram'll be as friendly as ivver again, an' Hiram had better say nought to him till then. As Mester Skinner used to say, a mon 'at soon flies into a passion doesna bear ill-will long; an' it 'll be so wi' him. Likely

enow he'll let Helen go to Heather Street next Sunday ; an' ony gate yo' con see one another here neaw an' then."

"Of course they con," said Molly, as if such a statement were quite superfluous.

"You're gradely kind," said Hiram.

Helen looked her thanks, but did not speak for a moment ; then she said—

"I wish—" and here she hesitated.

"What?" asked Molly.

"Hold thy tongue, an' don't interrupt ivverybody," said Miss Fry, severely.

"I didna interrupt her, oo interrupted hersel'."

"But it's a way tha's gotten."

"No fear ! I've more manners nor to do that, or to find fau't ivvery time onybody oppens the'r mouth."

After this somewhat confused retort, Miss Molly looked round with an air of satisfaction, as if she had said something extremely conclusive. Though the sisters were

sincerely attached, and joined most readily in performing any kind office, they had their little weaknesses, and claimed, or rather *exercised*, the privilege of nagging at each other pretty freely.

“ Well, what does tha’ wish, lass ? ” struck in Hiram, by way of putting an end to the sparring.

“ I wish ’at tha’d let politics a-be.”

“ Nay, nay,” said Bridget, “ Hiram knows best, an’ it’s th’ woman’s place to sympathize wi’ her husband, an’ to try to help him to do what’s reet. A mon ’at goes mad abeaut politics is bad enow, but he might do waur, an’ go mad wi’ drink. But Hiram’s not mad wi’ oather yet. If I had a husband,” said the little woman, sitting very erect, with the faintest flush stealing into her withered cheeks, “ if I had a husband I should be proud to see him takin’ his place among other men, an’ holdin’ his own wi’ th’ best. I’m sure, though Hiram may get into

trouble, he'll nivver do aught to bring him into disgrace."

Hiram recognized Miss Fry's speech with a smile, and said—

"I can't give up politics yet, lass. When there's no more wrongs to be righted, an' no more sufferin's produced by bad laws, I may think o' keepin' quiet; not till then."

"I think yo'd better be walkin'," said Bridget, "as Helen ought to be at home i' good time, an' yo' con talk that subject over as yo' go."

Acting upon this kindly-intended hint the young couple departed, leaving the sisters to discuss their affairs and prospects, which they did with as warm an interest as if they were personally concerned in those affairs turning out to the best advantage.

CHAPTER VI.

A GATHERING STORM.

THE weeks passed, and the resentment awakened in the breast of Isaac Briggs by Hiram's opposition to the proposition which he favoured increased rather than diminished, so that he was of necessity kept in ignorance of the young man's engagement to his daughter. The meetings of the Chartist committee became more frequent, and as events made it imperative for them to decide what recommendation they should issue in reference to the proposed cessation of labour, differences of opinion were expressed more positively and strongly by the majority, of which Mr. Briggs was a member,

and by the minority, to the leadership of which Hiram had been tacitly elected. Early in August they learnt that the leading adherents of the Charter in Manchester, the headquarters of the National Association, had determined to advise the labouring classes throughout the land to observe the sacred month, and received a request of co-operation in their own district in carrying out the project. In spite of the protests, the entreaties, and the arguments of the minority, it was resolved that a mass meeting should be called and this measure advocated.

In obedience to the summons which was in consequence issued, on the day appointed the hungry and angry men of Millvale might have been seen walking through the streets and converging in crowds at the place of meeting. Among them were large numbers of handloom weavers, who, with a sad, sardonic humour, described the noise

made by their looms as "poverty knock, poverty knock;" others who were out of work, others who had left the mill in order to be present at the meeting. Some walked along with an air of dejected misery, as if scanty fare and long-continued anxieties had robbed them even of the consolation of hope; some, though pale and poorly clad, had a look of fierce defiance and resolution which showed that they would offer dangerous material on which to pour inflammatory speech; and mingling with these men who were blindly grasping at the straw which they expected to save them in their need, were a few of the lowest class, attracted to the meeting by mere idle curiosity or by a vague anticipation of mischief by which they might be gainers.

The place of meeting was a large piece of common land on the northern side of the town. A platform of wagons was provided for the speakers, and near this were ranged

men bearing banners, on which were inscribed mottoes expressing the feeling of those who carried them, and showing them to be favourable to the promoters of the assembly. As the people collected from Millvale and the surrounding hamlets, they closed up about the wagons, forming a dense mass of human beings. As they swayed about, waiting for the commencement of the proceedings, various pieces, such as the "Lion of Freedom," were sung, and now and again a shout of impatience arose. Men who had seemed hopeless and lifeless caught the feeling that animated the others, and joined their voices to the general hubbub. Various discussions, anticipative of the speeches, took place among various small knots of persons; and then for a few moments all discussion was stopped, and cries of pain or anger arose from those who were pressed or crushed as the crowd swayed like corn waving in the wind.

And now, amid a buzz of excitement, the leaders mounted the platform, each well-known figure being greeted with a round of cheers. A myriad faces were turned to the one central point; and the attention of all those thousands was as undivided as if but one mind animated the whole. Among those who stepped on the wagon were Isaac Briggs, Hiram Greg, and Mr. Stapleton. The chairman of the committee presided on this occasion, but excused himself from making a long speech on the plea that his voice would be too weak to reach the ears of so vast a concourse. He merely asked for a patient and impartial hearing for the speakers who were to address them, and announced the purpose of the meeting. He would ask Isaac Briggs—a working man like themselves, and a staunch friend to their cause—to move a resolution approved by the committee.

Mr. Briggs stepped to the front of the

platform, and was received with cheers. He waited patiently for the cheering to subside, scanning the vast audience meanwhile with his small, keen eyes, as if he would read their very thoughts. In one hand he held a slip of paper, and, when silence was obtained, he said :—

“ Mester Cheerman, fellah-Chartists, I’ll read th’ resolution which I have to propose :—‘ That labour shall cease until the Charter becomes the law of the land.’ (Immense cheering.) That’s short an’ sweet, an’ yo’ seem to think so by th’ way yo’ shout. It hardly needs a speech to persuade yo’ to pass it ; but I mut say a toothree words. (Go it, old un !) Now, lads, yo’ all know what evils we ha’ to feight against. Yo’ know ’at we ’at work an’ produce th’ wealth o’ th’ country get a varry little share on it. Th’ masters are still lowerin’ wages, an’ we are bein’ driven nearer to starvation point ivvery day. (Groans and ‘ Shame ! ’)

Are we to sit deawn an' bear all patiently ?
(No.) I say no ! We want political power
so 'at we may not be tools an' slaves any
longer. Th' middle classes have failed us
an' fooled us, and we mut trust them no
more. They said i' '32, ' Help us to pass th'
Reform Bill, an' we'll help yo' at after ;' but
neaw, when we ask 'em to join us an' per-
form the'r promise, they say, ' Help us to
repeal th' Corn Laws, an' then we'll see
abeaut it !' What's th' meanin' o' this Corn
Law cry ? It means 'at th' measters want
to be able to reduce wages still more. We
shan't get th' benefit ; they'll take care o'
that. (Reet, lad.) We've been fooled once,
an' we don't mean to be fooled again. Once
bitten, twice shy. We're askin' for power,
an' we mean to have it. We mean th'
Charter to be law sooner or later, an' both
Whigs an' Tories 'll find 'at its six points are
sharp enow to let some o' the'r consate out.
(Laughter.) We intend to have a vote—

that every mon, 'cos he is a mon, an' not 'cos he pays so mich rent, shall have a vote. (Hear, hear.) An' when we send a mon to represent us i' Parliament we intend 'at he *shall* represent us, an' so we say let us have annual Parliaments, 'at we may ca' our representatives to account, an' oather send 'em packin', or elect 'em o'er again at th' year's end, accordin' as we think they've served us well or ill. To protect oursel's again' them 'at 'ud try to make us vote their way we demand th' ballot, so 'at we may vote i' obedience to our own judgment, none darin' to make us afraid, or bein' able to do so. At present th' law assumes 'at brass an' brains go together; but there are rich foo's as well as poor uns, an' some poor men have brains as good as rich uns. (Applause.) Why, then, should th' law say 'at a mon shan't be able to sit i' Parliament unless he has a certain amount o' brass? Is his fitness to be a legislator to be measured by th'

depth of his breeches pocket? We mean' to ha' done wi' this property qualification; an' we ask 'at th' approval o' th' people shall entitle a mon, whether he's rich or poor, to help to make th' laws by which the people's governed. (Cheers.) But when this is done th' job isna finished. How is a poor mon to live if he's elected? He can't live on air, though some o' th' measters seem to think 'at we ought to fatten on it, judgin' by th' wages they pay. (Laughter.) Well, we shouldna make this mistake. A member o' Parliament ought to be th' servant o' th' people, an' if they have th' liberty o' choosin' th' servant as 'll do the'r work th' best, they mut pay him what's reet an' sufficient. Then we know 'at even among them 'at has votes, power isna equal. In one borough yo' have but a handful o' voters, yet they have as mich weight i' Parliament as five or ten times the'r number i' another place. Is that reet? No! an'

we say let us have equal electoral districts, 'at th' worth o' votes may be equalized. (Hear, hear.) This is our programme, thro' which we don't intend to be turned aside, noather to th' reet hond or to th' left. Are we likely to get what we ask? Ay, we are, if we show 'at we mean what we say. (That's it.) He's a gradely thick yed 'at won't be taught by experience, an' I want to ask yo' what experience has to say to us? It teaches us, i' th' first place, to depend on oursel's, an' not on th' Whigs or on th' Tories. The'r promises, like pie-crust, seem made to be broken, as th' sayin' is. They've promised to help us, an' they have helped us as mich as they've flown, an' as they're noather birds nor angels that isna mich. (Laughter.) We've agitated, an' agitated, until some on us are gettin' fair sick o' th' job. One Government after another, one Parliament after another, takes no notice on us when we're peaceable; an' when we make

a bit of a dust nobbut send soldiers to shoot us down an' clap us i' jail. The'r ear is deaf to our cry, an' the'r hearts are turned to stone. As late as last May a big petition were presented to Parliament, wi' more nor three million signatures attached, an' what were the result? Nought! Ther' were some talk abeaut demagogues an' so on, an' when Mr. Duncombe moved 'at th' petitioners should be heard by the'r counsel or agents at th' bar o' th' House, forty-nine voted wi' him, an' two hundred and eighty-seven against. That shows what we may expect thro' petitionin' a landowners' an' manufacturers' Parliament. It's nobbut a waste o' paper an' ink. But there is a way, th' way pointed out i' this resolution, to gain th' end we seek. It's thro' us 'at th' wealth o' th' country comes, an' it's workin' folks 'at tills th' fields o' th' landowners, an' builds th' mills, an' makes th' machinery o' th' manufacturers. Wi'out us looms 'll

weive varry little calico or blankets. If we refuse to sweat oursel's to skeletons, an' wear our fingers to th' bone, trade mut stop, an' th' proudest lord, or th' most grindin' skinflint of a measter, mut admit our power. Parliament an' Government, blind to our sufferin', an' deaf to our complaint, 'll be forced to listen when trade stops, when taxes drop off, an' they're i' want o' brass to pay the'r soldiers, an' bishops, an' titled pensioners. They're livin' on our blood neaw, an' if we refuse it to 'em they'll be forced to give in. There's no law again' a mon refusin' to work, if th' pay doesna pleas' 'im, an' there's nought to prevent us thro' unitin' to get what we shall nivver get i' any other way. Let's have no divisions; let's a' pull one way; an' what they winna give us for our sake they'll be forced to give us for the'r own. Show 'at yo're men, not slaves to be trampled on, an' then ready to kiss th' heel 'at crushed yo'. I' other parts

they're wakenin' up. Th' colliers are out i' th' Potteries an' i' th' Black Country. A big meetin' on Mottram Moor passed this resolution yesterday. Manchester's a' alive, an' it does seem as if th' day of our emancipation were drawin' near. Let us help to strike a blow to bring the tyrant down—a blow for freedom an' what's reet."

Towards the close of this speech Briggs became vehement, even passionate. The intensity of his feeling had lent him an eloquence beyond any which he had before displayed; and his concluding words were no sooner uttered than the great concourse uttered shout upon shout of approval, cheers which were as ominous as distant thunder in the ears of more than one family within half a mile of where they arose. Hiram and Mr. Stapleton exchanged looks plainly conveying that all hopes of bringing the meeting to a better mind were at an end. The enthusiasm with which the speech had been received proved that too clearly.

The resolution was seconded in an address of a character equally determined with that of the mover; and when the orator proceeded to denounce the obnoxious new Poor Law in no measured terms, the shouts and groans were ample evidence that his words found a ready echo in his hearers' hearts; but when, going beyond anything Briggs had ventured on, he dropped some carefully guarded hints which were construed as encouragements to violence, the tumult of applause became a storm, and one or two pistols were discharged among the crowd.

"This is terrible," said Mr. Stapleton. "There are men here who mean mischief, or who will be hurried into it without meaning it."

"That's true," Hiram replied. "Will na yo' speak a word for quietness?"

The seconder of the resolution having finished his speech, the chairman rose to submit the proposition to the meeting. Mr.

Stapleton, springing to the front of the wagon, asked permission to say a few words, and turned towards the people.

"He's no Chartist," shouted one voice.

"He's a Repealer," cried another.

"He's a gradely friend to poor fowk," screamed a thin, pinched, hand-loom weaver.

"He's a parson," said a fourth.

"Down wi' a' priests," yelled a fifth.

"Hear him!" "Put him deawn!" "Fair play!" "Happen Briggs has convarted him!" "We want no sarmons!" came from several voices, while an angry murmur passed over the crowd, which began to surge to and fro, to shriek and whistle, and demand that the vote should be taken. In vain the chairman asked for silence; Mr. Stapleton was obliged to yield to the clamour and retire.

"You try them," he whispered to Hiram.

Hiram stepped forward, and the chairman asked the people to listen to a member of

the committee. The mass of white, haggard faces—for all the faces to him seemed white and haggard—the sound of a thousand murmuring voices, struck a chill of awe to the young man's heart. But he would not allow himself to be daunted, and began to speak with a desire which mastered every other feeling—the desire to turn from ruin and disaster the men before him, who, he felt, were being fatally misled by passion and unwisdom. He might not be able to stem the tide, but at least he would speak some words for peace and order which might not be without effect.

“Fellow-Chartists,” he commenced.

“Hear, hear,” shouted several. “That’s the way to say it,” others cried.

“Fellow-Chartists, I believe yo’ve made up your minds to pass this resolution—(Thou’rt reet theer, lad)—and therefore I shan’t say a word abeaut it—(We’ll try to bear it if tha’ shuts up now !)—but I mut

say a toothree words abeaut th' hints dropped by th' seconder o' th' motion. Don't let's have ony thoughts o' violence. Yo' know what some Chartists ha' suffered i' consequence o' riots an' disturbances." ("We know!" "We'st ha' revenge!" and a further discharge of pistols). "Do what you will," Hiram continued, "so long as yo' observe th' law; be orderly an' peaceable, for your own sakes, for th' sakes o' your wives an' childer, for th' sake o' th' cause we a' have at heart——"

Here he was interrupted by an indescribable tumult. The men were in no mood to listen to pacific counsels, and his voice was drowned in the confused and increasing din.

"Go hoam to thi mother," one voice recommended.

"An' ax her for some gruel," added another.

"An' save thi wind to blow it wi'," struck in a third.

Then everything was lost in a tempest of cat-calls, hooting, groaning, and whistling.

"You had better stand back, they'll hear no more," said the chairman ; and, being of the same opinion, Hiram retired.

"All in favour of the resolution, 'That labour shall cease until the Charter becomes the law of the land,' moved by Isaac Briggs, seconded by Ephraim Dunkerley, show it in the usual way."

In response to this appeal a vast forest of hands sprang into the air, and the acclamations of thousands of voices were borne upon the wind.

"To the contrary," shouted the chairman, as soon as he could make himself heard.

Hiram and Mr. Stapleton held up their hands, and were greeted with rounds of laughter and ironical applause.

The meeting was now concluded ; the people descended from the platform, and the crowd began to move. Like a dark cloud

driven before a gale it moved, some few small fragments being detached and drifting away ; but the main body kept together, a thick and threatening mass. Onward it travelled, away from the common where it was first collected, down a road forming one of the main entrances to the town, now singing a few broken lines of a Chartist song, now raising a loud murmur, like the noise of breakers upon a rocky coast—a threatening murmur which was heard afar.

Will lightning flash from that sombre, ominous cloud ? If so, on whose devoted head will its fury strike ?

CHAPTER VII.

THE WATERS LET LOOSE.

THE mob, increasing in numbers as it went on, flowed down the road and into the town. Each by-street and court along the route proved to be a tributary, and swelled the volume of the human stream. Most of the additions thus made were persons of no clear convictions—ignorant, violent in temper, and led to join the agitators by their love of noise and turbulence. They were of the class who attach themselves to any street demonstration, and who, without knowing or caring what its objects are, prove the most perilous element in the crowd. Wan-faced women, many of them with children

in their arms, came to the doors of their cottages to watch the progress of this undisciplined army ; shopkeepers began to put up their shutters, and persons in a superior position to that of the men who composed the moving host were struck with fear, and filled with gloomy forebodings of the results to themselves and their property should the town be left in the power of the Chartists. Now and again a halt took place opposite the house of some well-known sympathiser or opponent, to cheer in the one case, to groan and hoot in the other. As yet, no definite purpose seemed to rule the multitude, but they went on, driven by a vague feeling of anger and exasperation, an instinct of hostility and mischief.

But as they reached a point where the main street of the town intersected the road by which they had approached, several men, arriving from the opposite direction, came up and spoke a few excited words to the

foremost among the Millvale men. Some intelligence of a highly pleasing and interesting nature was communicated, which passed from mouth to mouth with wonderful rapidity. In an incredibly short space of time it was generally known that a large number of Chartists from Mottram, Ashton, and other places had that morning entered Manchester, and drawn the plugs from the boilers in the mills, thus effectually stopping the machinery, and turning out all the operatives. Shout after shout of exultation was raised as this news spread, and a cry arose, "Draw the plugs ! Draw the plugs !"

A chemical solution may, at one moment, appear clear and limpid, but if a piece of string or stick be lowered into it, the next moment the substance hitherto dissolved begins to fly around the centre thus provided, and soon forms hard and sparkling crystals. The intelligence which had been brought of the doings in Manchester offered

a centre round which the vague, indefinite feelings of the multitude took shape. What had been before an aimless march, a mere threatening demonstration, was transformed at once into a progress with a purpose. Leaders entirely different from those who had appeared upon the platform, with the exception of the seconder of the resolution, took their places in front to direct the movements of those who, up to the present time, had been undirected, but who were ready to follow and obey.

With more noise of singing and shouting ; with more brandishing of sticks ; with an occasional report following the discharge of a rusty pistol, the crowd flowed on, flooding roadway and pavement like waters broken loose. Diverging from the road which they had hitherto kept, they soon came in sight of a large mill with adjoining weaving sheds and other contiguous buildings. As the foremost Chartists appeared in sight, shout-

ing, waving sticks, and gesticulating, the yard gates, by which alone access could be gained to the premises, were swung together. But the men who had come to still the throbbing pulses of the mill, to hush the sound of its busy life, were not discouraged nor dismayed. Gathering round like bees in swarming time, they loudly demanded admittance. The refusal of the people within was met by a reiteration of the demand, backed by a chorus of whooping and derisive laughter, and a threat of forcing the gates or scaling the wall if the bolts were not withdrawn. Still the gates were kept firmly barred.

A parley then took place between the besieged and the besiegers, in the course of which the leaders of the latter announced their determination to draw the plugs from the boilers, and turn out the workpeople who were within, adding that if entrance were granted this would be the utmost evil

that would be done, but if a determined opposition were offered, they would not be answerable for the consequences. It was further hinted that it would be an easy matter to batter down the gates, or to scale or make a breach in the wall. These considerations received additional weight from the fact that the people who had been at work began to pour out of the mill, and show signs of sympathy with the beleaguering host. It would have been easy for them to overpower the small number who were holding the gate, and thus make a free passage for the Chartists. It was clear that the operatives, who had so lately left their machines, needed only a very slight excuse to suspend their labour for an indefinite time, thus doing their part in deciding the result of this most remarkable method of applying political pressure. The master, who had been directing the small group, chiefly composed of clerks, in their efforts to

oppose the invasion of his premises, saw that he must bow to circumstances. He was beset behind and before ; there was nothing for it but to yield, and hope for the best. Finally the following terms of capitulation were agreed upon : that not more than fifty men should be allowed to enter the yard, and that when they had drawn the plugs they should retire, taking their followers with them, without doing further damage. These conditions having been explained by the leaders, and received with acquiescent acclamations by the assemblage, the key was turned in the lock, the bolts were shot back, and the gates opened.

Great cheering followed this first sign of victory. The crowd pressed eagerly forward, each individual being anxious to be among the selected number. But the way was kept by those who had taken the principal part in negotiating terms, and by whom those who passed in were carefully counted. When

the number agreed upon had been admitted an announcement to that effect was made to those who were trying to force their way to the front, and in conformity with the treaty they remained waiting until the fortunate fifty accomplished their task.

The engines were already stopped, and the busy pulses of the mill were still. Shortly the persons who had entered the yard returned to their companions—and the plug was removed from every boiler on the premises ! Their reappearance was hailed with wild shouts of delight, and having so far attained their end the throng began to move away.

A big, gaunt man, named Mason Potter, with long, iron-grey hair, flashing eyes, and a large mouth, chiefly remarkable on account of one of the front teeth having dropped out of its place, had assumed the position of general, Dunkerley being his lieutenant. The pair marched in front of the crowd for

some distance, conferring earnestly together. Giving a signal for a halt when they reached a suitable place, Potter mounted a low stone wall, and steadying himself, by holding on to Dunkerley's shoulder, delivered a brief address to his army.

"Now, lads," he said, "th' time for talkin's past, th' time for action's come. We've made a gradely start, an' what's well begun ought to be well ended. But if that's to be so we mut divide. Ther's no use i' settin' ten men to do a job 'at con be done by one. Some on yo' mut go to Sunnybroo' Mills, another lot to Spark Loan Mills, an' I, an' them 'at 'll follow me, 'll go to Spring-side. Split up i' equal parties, an' do th' job as we've done it here, an', afore neet, we'st ha' stopped ivvery mill i' th' town. Now, move quick an' determined."

The proposal to divide was accepted without hesitation, and, in response to cries of "Sunnybroo'," "Spark Loan," detach-

ments formed, and went their several ways, Dunkerley heading that which made Sunnybrow its goal, while, notwithstanding Mason Potter's advice that they should go in equal numbers, more than half the concourse followed Potter himself, and, under his guidance, set out for Springside.

Hiram and Mr. Stapleton, keeping together, had followed from the scene of the meeting, and witnessed the event which had already been accomplished. They had feared that worse evil would be done than was actually the case, and were infinitely relieved to find that no reckless violence had been committed. When the division took place they were standing on the edge of the crowd, but where they could hear Mason Potter's words.

"There seems some little reason left among them," said Mr. Stapleton.

"Ay, but ther's no tellin' how long it may last. Yo' know what happens when a tiger's tasted blood."

"Well," rejoined the minister, "we must follow to Springside, though God alone knows whether we can do any good."

"They hate Champley like poison," said Hiram, "an' I'm feart they'll noan stop wi' drawin' his plugs. But let us go an' see th' worst. Happen we may do some good, after a'."

The large, ragged band of Mason Potter's followers were now in motion again. Retracing their footsteps for a short distance up the road, they took a turn to the right, away from the heart of the town. The few shops they passed were all closed, and the occupants of the houses near the road looked out with white and terror-stricken faces as the tramp of feet and the sound of voices announced their approach. Before long the houses became more rare, and green fields stretched out on either hand. About three quarters of a mile from their last point of departure, a lane led away to the left; a

brook flowed along one side of the lane ; and up this lane, some three or four hundred yards, were situated the Springside Mills. Beyond the mills, the ground gradually rose on each side of the brook, forming a valley up whose cool vista many a heated and weary traveller had cast an admiring and longing look. On one of its sloping banks, far enough away to be out of range of the whirr of the machinery and the smoke that poured all day from the long chimney of the factory, stood a house, barely visible through the surrounding trees, the residence of Mr. Champley, the proprietor of Springside Mills.

Mr. Champley was an ardent corn-law repealer, and at more than one meeting had used strong words in reference to the Chartist demands and procedure, and to the leading Chartists of the locality. He had, moreover, been a staunch advocate of the new poor law, when its provisions were first

laid before Parliament by the Government of Sir Robert Peel ; and had followed up his advocacy of this measure by becoming the chairman of the first board of guardians elected in the district to carry out those provisions after its enactment. Add to this that he was a rash, impulsive man, whose real kindness of heart was often insufficient to prevent his using, both in public, and in the comparative privacy of his own works, words which rankled in the hearts of his workpeople, and of those to whom they were bound by class sympathies, and that, like other employers of labour at the time, he had been obliged to cut down wages to a very low figure by causes which were but imperfectly understood, or entirely misconstrued, by those who felt the pinch of the reduction ; and it will appear that the fear of Mr. Stapleton and Hiram, that he might fare worse than his neighbours, was not altogether groundless. They knew well the

feeling with which he was regarded ; and their fears taught them that this feeling might, in circumstances like the present, blaze up into deeds whose dire consequences it would be difficult to measure.

As soon as the corner of the lane was turned, and the mills and house came in view, a shout rose from hundreds of throats, which plainly indicated the satisfaction which would be felt in inflicting some injury upon the mill-owner, and the human flood poured on with increasing impetuosity. With Mason Potter leading the way, the lane with the brook flowing peacefully by its side was quickly traversed, and the first mass of buildings reached. No difficulty was found in gaining admission, there being here no enclosed yard, securely shut in. Without resistance, though not without protest, the plugs were drawn ; and the people from the factory were soon mingling with the crowd without.

"Where's owd Champley?" shouted a voice; "we'd like to look at him."

"He's noan here," answered one of the workpeople."

"He'll be sorry to miss us," remarked another.

"Let's ca' at his residence," a fourth proposed, and was answered by a burst of laughter.

"We'st just be i' time for dinner," cried Mason Potter, with a grin which showed the gap in his front teeth unpleasantly.

And a movement towards Springside, as Mr. Champley's house was called, immediately began.

"Hold!"

The voice was the voice of Hiram Greg, and the word was uttered in such a tone as to turn every eye upon the speaker. A heap of cinders from the boiler fires had been placed against the wall in the wider space opposite the mill to be used in re-

pairing the roadway ; and on to this heap Hiram had mounted so as to be able to make himself heard by all.

“Who’s he ?” asked a rough young fellow, turning to Isaac Briggs, who happened to be near.

“He pertends to be a Chartist ; but he’s a faint-hearted soart,” returned that worthy.

“Wants to spoil sport, does he ?” said another.

“That’s his game,” returned Briggs.
“Hearken to him !”

“We’ll stop him.”

“Just pose a toothree cinders away,” suggested Isaac ; “quiet, so as he won’t notice.”

“Listen, lads, to one word o’ reason,” Hiram was saying, too intent on his purpose to mark what was passing in reference to himself. “Yo’ve banded together for one purpose, an’ now yo’re leavin’ it for no good end. If yo’re determined to draw th’ plugs, do it quietly an’ quickly ; but don’t go

wastin' your time i' frightenin' fowk. Frightenin' fowk is waur nor childer's work when yo' might be doin' something more satisfactory. Ther's work enow afore yo' at th' mills wi'out going to anybody's heause——”

The crowd were listening impatiently; they had fixed their minds upon the visit to Springside. The suggestion of Briggs had been acted upon, and as the cinders in front of the heap were removed, the loose mass suddenly gavè way, and left Hiram sprawling on his back. The merriment of those who had thus cut short Hiram's speech was in proportion to his discomfiture.

The march which had been interrupted for a little while was resumed, and in less than a quarter of an hour Springside was reached. It was a large, substantially built, but not pretentious, mansion, three stories in height. The front, of dark red brick, seamed with white lines of plaster, was

broken on the ground floor by a heavy porch, sustained by pillars, flanked on each side by two windows ; and above, two tiers of five windows each, all with frames painted white. The door was of the same colour, relieved by a bright brass knocker. A smooth lawn, with flower beds and shrubberies, afforded a pleasant prospect from the windows of the rooms chiefly occupied by the family. But the prospect was not so pleasant when the band of excited men—poor of dress and threatening of aspect—began to trample the trimly kept beds, to break rudely through the shrubs, and to swarm upon the lawn.

“What is that noise?” asked a young lady, as she caught the sound of trampling feet and the confused murmur of voices.

The speaker was tall, dark-eyed, with a wealth of curling hair falling about her face. Hardly a woman, slim in figure, there was yet about her appearance and manner that

which would claim and fix attention. Leaning in a listening attitude across the table, looking out of the window facing her, as she sat, she exclaimed—

“There are men—workmen, evidently—coming up the drive !”

“It’s the Chartists !” cried Mrs. Champley, springing up from the table, on which were the remains of dessert.

Immediately all within the room were in confusion. “What will become of us ?” “They will burn the house !” “We are at their mercy !” and other cries broke from Mrs. Champley and her daughter as they caught sight of the thickening crowd.

“For Heaven’s sake be quiet,” cried Mr. Champley ; “they cannot mean any serious harm. I’ll soon settle with them. Miss Wharton,” turning to the girl who had first perceived the approach of the mob, “do you take Mrs. Champley and Ethel into the library, while I deal with these people.”

Without any outward sign of excitement Miss Wharton obeyed, and led Mrs. Champley and her friend Ethel away.

The concourse was now thick in front of the house. Throwing up the window, Mr. Champley waited to speak. The people hooted and groaned, shrieked and whistled, so that a voice of thunder could hardly have made itself audible above the din.

“Well, my men, what do you want?” he cried, as soon as a slight lull took place.

But a fresh outburst of hoots and groans was the only response, and, while Mr. Champley still stood at the window trying in vain by his gestures to quiet the mob, which was becoming more and more vociferous and unruly, some person tore up a piece of turf from the edge of the lawn, and flung it, striking him full in the face. The example thus set roused the spirit of mischief and destruction; earth, clods, stones, sticks torn from the trees, flew thick and

fast, shattering the windows, defacing the pure whiteness of the door.

The owner of Springside, however, was not the man to beat a hasty retreat. Hurrying into the library, he seized a couple of fowling-pieces, hastily loading one with powder only, but putting a charge of shot into each barrel of the other.

"Don't do anything rash, Mr. Champley," begged Miss Wharton, while he was thus engaged; "if they see a gun they will be infuriated."

"They won't hear reason, and I must hold them at bay if possible until help arrives. I can't let them wreck or burn the place."

And he strode off with his weapons into an upper room. Bidding her companions to remain where they were, Miss Wharton followed him.

"Let me speak to them before they see the guns," she said, placing her hand on his arm.

“It would be madness——”

“No, no ; I will take the consequences.”

She threw up one of the windows and bent forward, more than half of her tall figure, clad in a dress nearly white, being visible.

Meanwhile Hiram had been exerting himself to the utmost outside. He had begged Potter and Briggs in succession to draw the men away without avail ; he had several times essayed in vain to make himself heard. At last, climbing upon a stone pedestal from which an ornamental vase had been cast down, without hat, with blood trickling from a cut upon his forehead, received in his fall near the mill, and gesticulating wildly, he shouted with all the power of his lungs. No one heeded what he said, and only such stray words as “violence,” “pillage,” “disgrace to the town,” made themselves heard above the hubbub. While thus engaged, he caught sight of Miss Wharton, whose eyes

met his as she threw up the sash. Others saw her almost simultaneously, and were awed for a moment by her pale face and dark flashing eye.

"Men of Millvale," she said, taking advantage of the temporary hush, "is it brave, is it like true Lancashire lads, to come here in this wild and lawless manner, destroying the property of one who has done you no harm, frightening women by your conduct?"

"We dunnot want to hurt ony women," cried Mason Potter.

"'Specially a gradely lass like owd Wharton's," shouted another, who had recognized the daughter of the mayor.

"Then," she continued, "go away quietly; and I'll promise for Mr. Champley that he will hear and consider any reasonable complaint you may wish to make."

"Let's see him neaw!" cried Potter.

"He's feart, an' sends a lass to talk for him," cried a voice.

"Is he?" cried the person referred to, appearing at Miss Wharton's side. "Not of five thousand of you. Now, say your say."

This was the signal for a fresh outburst of tumult, during which Mr. Champley requested Miss Wharton, in a peremptory manner, to retire; and she, seeing that he had destroyed whatever influence she might have exerted, withdrew into the room.

"Have him out!"

"Roll him i' th' brook!"

"Smash th' door!"

It was in vain that Mr. Champley attempted to make himself heard; and, after standing looking at the angry multitude for a full half minute, he stepped backward into the room.

"Down wi' th' poor law," cried one.

"An' wi' them 'at made it," cried others.

"Th' Charter for ever!" came the response; and another volley of missiles was

discharged, leaving scarcely a whole pane of glass in the front of the house.

“Burn him out—that’s th’ way to serve tyrants,” shouted one man who had distinguished himself by his activity in hurling earth and stones.

“Clear away, or I’ll fire !” Mr. Champ-ley’s voice now rang out, sharp and loud ; and he raised a fowling-piece to his shoulder, and its barrel caught the gleam of the declining sun. “Thank Heaven they come !” he exclaimed, almost in the same breath, turning to Miss Wharton.

“My father at their head,” she cried, venturing to the window once more to look down the approach.

The sight of the single deadly weapon, pointed into their midst, had quieted the mob for an instant, causing them to fall back for a little way and then to stand irresolute. Their growing passion would, doubtless, have led to some more determined

and desperate measures than they had yet resorted to if they had had time to recover from this momentary check ; but Mr. Champley's exclamation, and the sound of a quick, measured tread on the drive, by which most of them had come, indicated that assistance was near.

"The police ! the police !"

Several voices took up the cry, some in alarm, some in half-defiance.

"Ston' your ground !" said Mason Potter, in a loud tone. "We're fifty to one."

But the majority evidently considered discretion the better part of valour. Hesitation was followed by confusion. Some of those who had been most conspicuous when a victory seemed easy were the first to flee. Across garden beds, through shrubberies, and over fences the rioters raced pell-mell. Only a very few met the mayor of Millvale and the force of about a hundred policemen and special constables under his command,

Their own safety being the object which the persons engaged in the late disturbance chiefly sought, they would willingly have avoided any collision with the police; but two or three of their number being seized, an attempt at rescue—very weak and desultory—was made. Blows were struck, projectiles thrown, and the mayor, who was mounted, was struck on the cheek by a stone, and carried, almost insensible, into the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LITTLE CLOUD.

“OH, my dear, how could you? I should have fainted if I had tried to speak to all those rough men,” exclaimed Ethel Champ-ley, when in her own room she found herself alone with her friend immediately after the sudden dispersal of the rioters.

“I don’t believe in fainting.”

“Neither do I, but I do it.”

“I wish I were a man,” said Miss Wharton, clenching her hands, and with her eyes all aglow. “It is miserable to be a girl.”

“Not for you, my dear Charlotte. Why, you remind me of Joan of Arc——”

“Nonsense, you silly little goose. But I

do wish your father would have let me try what I could do. How I do long to show that I can do something—something different from what girls usually do! I hate to have nothing greater to accomplish than making a dog's head in Berlin wool, or singing a song in a drawing-room. Oh, dear me! it is very miserable to be a girl!"

"But what would you like to do? and what would Mr. Henderson say if he heard you talking in this strain?"

"I don't know what I should like to do, or what Mr. Henderson would say. But there—we must go downstairs, and see what news father brings. They will be anxious about us."

"But won't you let me fetch you a glass of wine?" asked Ethel, looking with admiration and wonder at her friend.

"No, thank you."

"Nor some Eau de Cologne?"

"Dear child, I might have been in a

battle—you are so anxious. Come along.” And the two went down, with their arms twined round each other’s waists.

“Oh, papa! Papa is hurt!” cried Charlotte Wharton, as she entered the library, where Mr. Wharton’s cheek was being sponged and plastered.

“It’s a mere scratch,” replied that gentleman.

“Nothing at all serious,” said Mr. Champ-ley. “But slight as the hurt is, I am sorry enough you have come by it here. How shall we thank you, my dear Wharton, for your timely assistance?”

“By saying nothing about it. I was only doing my duty. My visit is official, not friendly. Yes? Yes.”

Mr. Wharton was a portly gentleman, as became his office; a little beyond middle age, and with a due sense of the duties and honours attaching to his position. He had a curious habit of closing nearly every state-

ment he made by the word "Yes" addressed to himself in a slow interrogative manner, followed by the same word uttered in a tone of perfect assent. He first questioned himself as to the correctness of his statement, then clinched it by an emphatic affirmative.

"But how did you know they were coming here?" asked Mrs. Champley, referring to the rioters.

"Mr. Stapleton kindly gave us a warning."

"Oh, Mr. Stapleton," cried the lady, turning to the minister, who had entered with Mr. Wharton, "that was good of you."

"I left those poor misguided people at the mill," explained the gentleman addressed. "When they had drawn the plugs I heard the word given for them to come on here; and though I do not think they intended to do any serious mischief, I knew how easily a crowd have their feelings excited and are led to actions which the majority of them

would hate at another time ; so I thought it best they should be checked in time."

"And Charlotte here," said Mr. Champley, "tried to throw oil on the troubled waters—actually spoke to the scoundrels from the window."

"That was good," said Mr. Stapleton approvingly.

"I'm afraid you have been very venturesome, Charlotte," said her father. "It is dangerous for a young lady to mix herself up in such affairs. Yes ? Yes."

"I believe if Mr. Champley had kept out of sight they would have gone away. You won't be hard upon any of them, will you, papa ? You know some of them have had to bear a good deal, and we, who are better off, should be as patient with them as we can. There was only one who frightened me—a young man with blood on his face, standing on one of the pillars, and evidently urging the people on to more violence."

"Why, Miss Wharton, we shall have you turning Chartist. You must not let your sympathies run away with you," said Mr. Champley.

"This young man—would you know him again, Charlotte?"

"Certainly, papa. I have seen him before somewhere. Oh, yes! It was at Heather Street Chapel, and he was in the choir.

"It could not be Greg!" exclaimed Mr. Stapleton. "He was as much opposed to the people coming here as I was. He has set his face against any reckless or disorderly proceedings all along."

"Well, well, we must find him out, whoever he was. We must have the ring-leaders arrested at once, and make an example of them. Yes? Yes."

"Do you think, Mr. Wharton, there is any danger of those men returning if you and the constables go away?" asked Mrs. Champley.

“Not the least—not the least. Other parties have paraded the town during the day ; and I thought it best to be prepared in case any violence should be attempted. But I heard, as I came along, that after drawing some plugs they were breaking up, and this mob is, I think, effectually scattered.”

“We must see to having the windows boarded up for the night,” said Mr. Champley.

“And I must return to the Town Hall. I’ll leave a few men here for a while, and then you will be able to let me know if any fresh alarm arises.”

“Charlotte had better stay with us,” remarked Mrs. Champley.

“It will be best, as I cannot take her home. Yes ? Yes.”

When the mayor had gone Mr. Stapleton spoke to Miss Wharton again respecting the young man whom she had noticed ; and

from her description could feel no doubt that it was Hiram. He did not doubt that Hiram was trying to oppose the work of violence and destruction ; but he was sorry to find that she was firmly convinced that the young man who had attracted her attention was the very reverse of a peace-maker. Mr. Stapleton could not believe that Hiram had, like the rest, been carried away by a gust of passion. He feared, however, that the excess of his zeal had placed him in a situation which might result in wholly undeserved trouble.

CHAPTER IX.

LIKE A MAN'S HAND.

HIRAM left Springside with the crowd. Conscious of none but the most peaceable intentions, absorbed, moreover, in sad reflections upon the course adopted by the people, he had no fears in regard to his personal safety, no thought of any possible evil consequences to himself of this day's lawless proceedings.

Like many others he went up the glen behind the house and soon found himself alone. Throwing himself down wearily beneath a tree, he meditated long and sorrowfully upon the events of the last few hours. The setting sun shot its amber

beams through the foliage, and a few birds carolled their vespers close at hand. But, though he was not usually insensible to natural beauty, his mind was now engaged upon less pleasing themes. He knew that the country was lying under a cloud of the severest distress, and that many of the people in the immediate neighbourhood were feeling the pinch in the cruelest manner. Bread was almost at famine prices, while meat was a luxury which but a very small proportion of the working class ever saw upon their tables. The wages paid in mills were miserably low; the earnings of the hand-loom weavers, of whom Millvale contained a considerable proportion, were hardly enough to keep their recipients from absolute starvation. Thousands, both of adults and children, lived in a state of chronic hunger, knowing but very seldom the satisfaction of a sufficient meal. Added to this suffering was the sense of political

injustice as its cause. Like other Chartists, Hiram, though not altogether uninfluenced by Mr. Stapleton's arguments in reference to the corn laws, looked to a thorough redistribution of political power, which should give the people a more potent and direct voice in the legislature, as the chief means of ameliorating their distress; and he felt very strongly that those with whom he had hitherto worked had been deserted and betrayed by the influential middle class. He had heard so often that the people who benefited by the Reform Bill of 1832 had been false to the promises made during the preceding agitation, and that they were bent only upon their own advancement, that he could not free his mind from the impression that such was the case; and, consequently, could not shake off all suspicion that only selfish ends were aimed at by those who were now agitating for corn law repeal.

Still he mourned and feared the policy favoured by those Chartists who most influenced the minds of the masses; and he felt that if such counsels as had lately prevailed in Millvale were to rule in the future, he would be forced to cut himself adrift from his associates. His voice seemed powerless; would it not be best to make the strongest protest in his power by withdrawing from the Chartist committee?

But how would this affect his relations with Helen Briggs? Her father would then be confirmed in the unfavourable opinion which he already entertained, and his personal unfriendliness would be increased. From the first he had felt the secrecy of his engagement a burden, almost a disgrace. He must either keep up his connection with a society whose procedure he disapproved, or add to the hostility of Briggs, whom, both for his own and Helen's sake, he was anxious to conciliate.

Ruminating on these topics, he lay until the birds had finished their song and the sun had set. He was weary and weak from fasting and excitement. Rousing himself at length, he bathed his face in the brook, thus removing the traces of the cut upon his brow, and slowly mounting the bank, set out for home. His way led him along the edge of the common, on which the meeting had been held in the morning, and down the road which the mob had followed into the town.

Remains of the late excitement were still observable in the streets. Large numbers of men and women were lounging aimlessly about, or loitering in groups discussing the occurrences of the day, and magnifying the evil which had been done, or speculating on the still greater evil which might possibly follow. The majority exulted in the outbreak of popular passion, as a practical protest against the moneyed and influential

classes, having a vague, unreasoning idea that somehow the cloud which hung over them and their fortunes was beginning to disperse. A small minority mourned the turn which events had taken, as being likely to aggravate the ills from which they suffered, or, at best, to produce no good results.

Hiram walked on abstractedly, scarcely noticing the nods with which his acquaintances greeted him; replying mechanically when any one bid him "good neet," unconscious of the frowns and whisperings which his appearance evoked from others.

His home was in a long, dull street of brick cottages, each tenement being so exactly like the rest that a stranger might wonder how the respective inhabitants distinguished their own particular domiciles. The street door opened immediately, without any passage or lobby, into the chief room, or "house place." Raising the latch he hesitated, still holding the latch in his hand, and

looking with an expression of pained surprise at a figure seated on a low stool near to the empty grate. The figure was that of a woman, clad in a clean but faded cotton gown, her elbows resting on her knees, her head bent, her thin, straggling hair hanging loosely down so as to hide her face, and the hands which supported it.

“Mother,” said Hiram, softly closing the door.

No answer, or other sign that she was aware of his presence.

“Are yo’ sick?” he asked, gently laying one hand on her shoulder.

She let her right hand drop as if it were lifeless by her side, and slowly turned upon his face a pair of hot, wild eyes, showing a countenance fearfully marred by passion or by want. Whether the expression of the eyes was one of mere hopeless misery, or of mingled suffering and angry contempt, it would be difficult to say. At first the for-

mer seemed to prevail. Then, while she looked at her son, without moving a single muscle, the latter appeared to intensify, until it alone was to be observed. She spoke no word, but, having gazed at him for a few seconds, again buried her face in her hands. Hiram felt the look, which swept him from head to feet as the eyes fell, scorch like a hot breath, so concentrated was the scorn which it expressed.

"Come, come," he said, still speaking gently, though at a loss to account for this strange behaviour, "if yo're not well yo'd better go to bed."

"Tak' thysel' off; I want nought to do wi' thee," she replied after a pause, looking at him again.

"But what's up? Summut mut be wrong."

"Ay, wrong enow," she cried, springing up and speaking with sudden vehemence. "Come here; come wi' me." As she spoke

she seized him roughly by the arm, and led him to the bottom of the stairs.

Bidding him follow, she mounted to the bedroom which she usually occupied, and, pointing to the bed, said—

“Look theer! That’s what’s th’ matter.”

On the low camp bedstead, nestling close together, lay two children, one four and the other six years of age. They were thin, pale, hollow-eyed, and the blue veins showed clearly through the skin of their temples. Sometimes a twitching or spasm passed over the face of one of the little sleepers, and no one looking at them could doubt that they had been the innocent victims of hardship and privation.

“Fred an’ Sarah!” exclaimed Hiram in a low tone of surprise.

“Ay, ay,” moaned Mrs. Greg, “Fred an’ Sally. My own sister’s flesh an’ blood. But come away. Let ’em sleep i’ peace,” she continued, still controlling her voice out of

fear of wakening the children. As she spoke she laid her hand once more on Hiram's arm and led him out of the room.

"That's what's th' matter!" she cried, when they reached the lower apartment, resuming her vehemence of manner. "An' I've seen the'r poor mother dee to-day."

"Dead?"

"Ay, dead, killed—murdered!"

"Nay, nay, mother, you're excited an' don't know what yo're sayin'."

"Don't I?" and she laughed wildly. "Don't know what I'm sayin'! Oo were murdered if ivver woman were. Slowly—inch by inch. Clemmed to death! Haven't I known 'at oo were leavin' them childer day after day to go to th' factory, workin' her fingers to th' very bone, ivver sin' the'r feyther deed of a brokken heart? Haven't I known 'at oo were strivin' an' strugglin' to find 'em wi' bread so 'at oo might keep independent an' be able to tell 'em, when

they could understand, 'at they'd nivver been paupers a' the'r lives. Oh, Kate were gradely proud, an' said nought o' this to ony soul. But I didna know 'at her strength were failin', dribblin' away drop by drop, hour after hour, an' 'at oo'd been forced to stop away fro' th' mill, clemmin', uncared for, 'an alone. But this mornin' I went there while that meetin' were bein' held, an' found her i' bed—nay, not i' bed—oo hadn't a bed to lig on; but opo' a heap o' straw an' rags. 'My poor lass,' says I, 'what's th' meanin' o' this?' An' oo says, 'It means death, Rachel, lass. I've gotten to th' end o' th' long road. Happen there'll be some meat an' rest i' heaven.' 'Eh, lass,' I says, 'tha mutn't talk i' that'n. Why didna tha let me know tha were sick an' I'd ha' come afore, an' brought summat wi' me.' An' oo says, 'I know'd thee an' Hiram had enough to do for yoursel's; an' I thought I should be better soon, an' I were proud.' Then I

went to th' place where oo used to keep her coal, an' ther' wern't so mich as a bit o' dust. Then th' childer began to cry, and ask for a butty, an' I went to th' cupboard, an' I knew oo were watchin', an' I heard her try to speak. But ther' were no bread, only a bit o' cold potato th' size o' that," and Mrs. Greg held out two fingers of her left hand, crossing them at the knuckles with the fingers of the other. "Oh, my poor Kate!" she resumed, "oo lay there an' couldn't speak, while I tried to quieten th' childer, tellin' 'em I'd give 'em a butty soon. 'Rachel,' oo said, 'I've fastened ivvery thing 'at th' pawnbroker 'ud tak'. I couldn't ask for relief, for they'd ha' made me go into th' heause, an' separated me fro' my childer. God only knows what'll become on 'em neaw.' I'd only some coppers in my pocket, but I went to th' shop, an' gat a hauf of a four-pound loaf an' a bit o' coal an' a pinch o' tea. When I'd given th' childer a bit o'

bread I made a fire an' brewed a cup o' tea. Oo tried to drink, an' then thrutted th' cup away. Then I ran to a neighbour an' tell't her, as oo hoped for mercy, to run for a doctor. I took Kate i' my arms, an' oo oppened her eyes. 'Rachel,' oo says, in a whisper so low 'at I'd to put my ear to her lips, 'keep th' childer. Don't let 'em go to th' Bastile. Do th' best for 'em—' an' then her eyes oppened wide, an' oo spoke up, 'I see th' light—an' George's face a' shinin'—rest, rest!'"

Here Mrs. Greg paused, burying her face in her hands, and moaning aloud. Hiram was mute with astonishment and grief. In the course of her narrative, Mrs. Greg's voice had lost its ring of vehement scorn, and during its latter part was expressive of the most poignant anguish.

"Then oo were still," said Mrs. Greg, lifting her head, and sweeping her hand across her tearless eyes, "oo nivver spake

again, an' I knowed oo had gone where poor fowk clem no more. I held her i' my arms till th' doctor came, an' some o' th' neighbours wi' him. He said it were very shockin'. He didna seem a hard mon. I believe he had a bit o' pity in his heart. They tell't me I had better come away, an' they'd do what were reet by her. So I brought th' childer, though it were a long way for 'em to walk, an' I carried little Sally part o' th' way, an' oo fell asleep on my shoulder. That's what's th' matter. Nobbut that," she cried with another wild laugh. "But I don't know what I'm sayin'. I don't know what murder means, when th' rich are starvin' th' poor, an' lettin' 'em dee o' work an' want. As for thee," resuming her scornful manner, "as I came along, wi' Sally asleep i' my arms, fowk tell't me 'at tha were turnin' again thy own side, an' tryin' to persuade that meetin' to let th' rich fowk be, an' let things go on as they are.

Tha were feart o' stonnin' up wi' them 'at
'ud cast deawn oppressors an' give meat to
them 'at work."

As she finished she turned away from
Hiram with a gesture of scorn, and, seating
herself upon the low stool, rocked herself to
and fro, moaning as if all hope had fled.

Hiram mechanically snuffed the long wick
of the candle which was flaring on the table,
and stood, distressed and puzzled, not know-
ing what to say.

"Rat-tat-tat!"

A sharp, authoritative knock at the door
startled both him and his mother. Before
he had time to move, the latch was raised,
and two policemen stepped in.

"Well," said Hiram, hardly distinguishing
their dress in the dim light, "what do yo'
want?"

"Steady, my lad," replied the foremost
officer, "you'll hear soon enough."

As he spoke he flashed a light upon
Hiram's face and dress.

"We must ask you to come with us."

"Come wi' yo'? Where to? What for?"

"To th' office, on a charge o' takin' part in that disturbance at Mr. Champley's."

"But I did nought o' th' soart."

"Oh, of course not. Still we must ask you to come to th' office, and explain all about it to th' magistrates to-morrow morning."

Hiram sank upon a chair, and, resting his head upon the table, groaned aloud.

"What's this?" cried Mrs. Greg, rousing herself to a perception of what was going on.

"Your son?" said the policeman, pointing interrogatively at Hiram with his thumb.

"Ay, he's my son."

"Well, very sorry for you, but you see duty must be done. We have information that this young man was among the rioters this afternoon, and that he was takin' a prominent part in urgin' 'em to the destruction

of property. Perhaps he'll be able to clear himself, an' I hope he will, for your sake."

"Is this true, Hiram?" she cried, greatly excited. "Then tha didna turn again' thy own side, after a'. I shall be proud o' my lad yet."

"Rum go, this," said the officer to his companion; "but we must be going. Come, my lad." And he laid his hand on Hiram's shoulder.

Hiram rose and staggered out of the house, with a policeman on each side. He was put into a cell, and, without removing any portion of his clothing, threw himself down upon the boards which served for a bed. Faint and exhausted, he soon fell asleep, the last thing he remembered being a vision of a young lady like the one who had spoken to the rioters from the window of Mr. Champley's house.

CHAPTER X.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE GREAT UNPAID.

"COME, my lass, bustle abeaut," said Mrs. Briggs, briskly. "There'll be a row if thi feyther comes in afore breakfast's ready."

"I wish fowk 'ud be quiet," replied Helen, turning from the cupboard, from which she had been slowly reaching down some crockery.

"That's reet enow; 'but wishes nivver made onybody's porridge. Did they, feyther?"

The old man shook his head and smiled as he answered, "No, no."

"I could wish, if wishin' were wanted," continued Mrs. Briggs, as she drew the table

near to the large armchair, in which old Mr. Briggs was seated, "I could wish 'at Isaac 'ud let all this Chartist bother be. Someb'dy 'll be i' trouble thro' yesterday's doin's, an' if work's stopped for long we'st be hard set. Wishes isn't very nourishin' food."

"I have been young, an' now am old," began old Mr. Briggs, in a reedy voice——

"That's true," muttered his daughter-in-law, admiringly.

"——Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

"He were more lucky nor common, then," commented the literal-minded Mrs. Briggs. "You've knowed worse times nor these, haven't you, feyther?"

"Ay, ay," returned the old man. "Why, it's only a week—nay, it mut be more nor a week——"

"Never mind how long."

"——Well, it's happen years since Peterloo. They'd met i' Manchester, to hold a

reform meetin', an' though they were a' quiet, th' soldiers came an' hacked hundreds o' poor fowk wi' their swords. Ay, ay, it were a sad time."

The old man's memory seemed to have temporarily waked, and he talked for some time of the event which happened in 1819, and which, under the name of the "Peterloo Massacre," is still remembered by a few old people in Manchester and the neighbourhood. From this topic he diverged to reminiscences of earlier years, dwelling especially on the wild project of the operatives, in 1817, of making their way from Manchester to London on foot, each man carrying a blanket with him in order to avoid the expense of lodgings, for the purpose of bringing their appeal for reform in a touching and forcible way before the authorities—a project which earned them the name of the "Blanketeers." He was lapsing into confusion as to persons and dates, though

still talking with the warmest interest on these and kindred subjects, when Isaac returned from his walk.

"Is a' quiet?" asked his wife.

"Ay, quiet enow," he returned.

"That's a blessin'; I feared there'd be more trouble."

"We'n gie'n 'em a gradely start this time," said Isaac, chuckling.

"Yo' made noise enough to wakken th' dead," retorted his wife.

"Fowk seem to ha' settled deawn," continued Isaac, "an' happen it's as weel for th' present. They say t' soldiers were ordered to be ready, an' 'at Mr. Wharton were thinkin' to send for 'em if there'd been ony sign o' payin' others a visit like that to Champley's. Cowards an' oppressors are allus ready wi' the'r soldiers."

"Yo' didn't think they'd let yo' poo' the'r heauses deawn an' say nought?" asked Mrs. Briggs, sharply.

"Psha !" retorted Isaac, disdaining argument.

"Yo' were a set o' fine foo's if yo' did," pursued Mrs. Briggs, pushing her advantage. "An' I hope tha's had enough o' this sort o' work. It's well tha's not gotten thysel' into trouble."

"I'm lucky, tha sees," replied Mr. Briggs, glad to change the subject; "more lucky nor some. Th' police ha' nabbed some a'ready. I conno' reetly make out who's taken yet, but I'm tell't 'at Mason Potter's one, an' Webb Howarth, an' one o' Jonathan Cagill's lads. I'm reet sorry they should be i' trouble; but th' police mut do summat for the'r livin'. Oh, an' then there's Hiram Greg——"

"Hiram !" cried Helen, turning pale, and seizing the table for support.

"Ay," said Briggs, sharply, his tone contrasting with the exultation with which he had first uttered the name, "an' what's that to thee?"

"He did nought wrong, did he?" asked Mrs. Briggs.

"That depends."

"But he'd no part i' th' disturbance at Champley's, had he?"

"Not he!" sneered Briggs. "He'd turned again' his own side, an' opposed what th' majority wanted, an' he's sarved gradely reet. It's a rare joke to think he's gotten his fingers burnt."

"But what'll they do to him?" asked Helen, excitedly.

"Give him a year or two i' jail. Happen send him out o' th' country at Government expense," returned her father, tartly.

"Oh, oh!" Helen cried, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Thou'rt a brute," exclaimed Mrs. Briggs, angrily, nearly upsetting the table as she rose to put her arm round Helen. She had suspected the attachment existing between her daughter and Hiram. A woman's and

a mother's eye had perceived signs which others had failed to notice. Now all her suspicions were confirmed, and she understood that the future of her child was wrapped up in the fate of the young man over whose misfortune her husband triumphed with vindictive joy.

"Nay, nay, don't ca' names, Betty," struck in the old man. "What's a' this bother abeaut?"

"I'd be ashamed o' mysel," cried Mrs. Briggs, heedless of this warning, "to talk i' that'n abeaut a young fellah 'at nivver did thee ony harm. Ne'er mind him, lass, he knows nought abeaut it. Likely enow Hiram's not i' trouble at a'. It's only a tale. If it's true he'll be safe. There's plenty o' fowk to speak for Hiram. Mester Strepleton"—in her heat the good woman maltreated the minister's name worse than usual—"Mester Strepleton 'll not see him wronged, I'll warrant. I'd be ashamed o'

myself," turning again upon her husband, "to let politics make me so cruel, so spitefu', so fause——"

Isaac, who had risen, and was glaring angrily across the table, here brought down his hand with a blow that made the crockery rattle, and thus cut short his wife's indignant eloquence. Experience had taught him that only by some such means could he find an opportunity of being heard, when she was bent on "giving him a bit of her mind."

"What I want to know is what oo has to do wi' Hiram Greg!" he said, pointing to his daughter.

"Can't tha see?" asked his wife, hotly.

"Yo' don't think they'll send him away?" said Helen, struggling with her sobs. "Yo' know——"

"I know 'at he's a mean, underhanded-dealin' fellah," cried Isaac, in his most acrid tone. "He's been fause to th' committee,

an' neaw it seems he's been makin' love to thee on th' sly. It'll be a good job if such a sneakin' chap is shut up, an' I wouldn't save him if I could do it by liftin' up a little finger. I'm measter here," he proceeded, with the peculiar sideway jerk of his lip.

"An' th' enemy of injustice an' oppression," struck in his wife.

"I'm th' measter here, an' whether he gets out o' this hobble or not, he'st ha' nought to do wi' ony o' this family. Remember what I tell thi, Helen—tha nivver speaks to him again or tha takes th' consequences."

He concluded with another emphatic blow on the table, and putting on his cap, strode angrily out of the house.

"Isaac's a hot temper, but he's a good lad at th' bottom," said the old man, in a tone of some perplexity.

"Th' bottom seems to get further an' further deawn every day, then," replied

Mrs. Briggs, ruefully. "I wish he'd bring a bit of his goodness up to th' top. How-ivver, it's true enough 'at he's good at th' bottom. Why didna tha tell me, Helen, abeaut Hiram?"

"We thought it best to wait till feyther were less set again' him."

"It'd ha' been better to be straight-forrard. Keepin' things o' that sort secret is always a mistake—often it's worse nor a mistake. Tha might ha tell't me, if tha hadn't tell't thi feyther."

Helen smiled through her tears.

"Well, happen so," said Mrs. Briggs, smiling in spite of herself, as she answered Helen's thought. "I nivver were good at keepin' a secret, an' I should ha' been sure to let it out."

She then applied herself, in her rough, emphatic, but kindly way, to the removal of Helen's fears, assuring her that with his good character and influential friends there

was no practical danger of Hiram being made to suffer for a crime in which he had no part.

There are few things more difficult for any man than to read accurately and truly the workings of his own mind. The springs of action, apparently the most simple, are so recondite and complex that even a person accustomed to such inquiries would be puzzled to assign the exact motive for any particular deed. Had Briggs been questioned, when, after leaving home, he made his way to the police court, he would have said in effect (if he had sufficiently recovered his temper to give a civil reply) that he was impelled by a sympathetic interest in the fate of his associates. But there was also in his heart the desire to see Hiram in his hour of humiliation—a desire by no means inconsistent with the existence of that “bottom goodness,” in which his father had expressed confidence, that is, indeed, unless we are

sceptical as to the bottom goodness of many excellent Christian people, who, notwithstanding their pious raptures, sometimes feel a thrill of very worldly joy upon the defeat or overthrow of a rival or opponent. It is, perhaps, a cause for regret that such people's goodness is not a trifle more buoyant, so that it might, with greater frequency, rise to the surface, where it would be more appreciated than it can be while it is hidden away in the depths. In regard to this matter, however, we have often to walk by faith and not by sight, and if we can only keep the faith it is perhaps as well to be content. Then, again, Mr. Briggs was drawn on by a slight sense of danger, such as exerts a powerful fascination over the majority of minds. He was perfectly well assured that he deserved, quite as much as those who had fallen into the hands of the police, to stand in the dock, and this consciousness made him fear that some circumstance might come

to light which would result in a pressing invitation from the guardians of the public peace. It is true that he reasoned with himself to the effect that if the police had wanted him, they would have had him before now, and that, though he was prominent at the meeting, he had not like the others made himself conspicuous among the crowd at Springside. Still he could not rid himself altogether of the apprehension that he might be implicated, and that he was making this more possible by attending the court. Whatever might be his motive or mixture of motives, he, along with a considerable number of Millvale operatives, voluntarily or unwillingly idle, was present when the doors were opened for the admission of the public.

He took up a position at the back, where he would not be easily seen by the prisoners, and the space reserved for spectators was quickly crowded by an eager and interested

throng. A strong body of police was present to preserve order, though fortunately they were not needed more than usual in such a crowded court.

There was a full attendance of magistrates, Mr. Wharton, as mayor, occupying the chair, and Mr. Champley, with Charlotte Wharton, being accommodated with a seat on the bench.

Several minor charges of the character which police-court records have made lamentably familiar were first disposed of. Excepting one, none of these are deserving of mention. The exception was a charge of stealing a small loaf of bread from a shop. The prisoner in this case was a poor, miserable-looking object, whose wan face, hollow eyes, and tattered garments pleaded his excuse. He said he had been driven to the offence by the cries of his children, that he was a hand-loom weaver, and that, though he had done all the work he could, he had

only, during the preceding week, been able to earn elevenpence halfpenny on which to support himself, his wife, and three little ones. The prosecutor, who appeared very reluctantly, after answering the questions put to him, pleaded earnestly for the offender's release. At the close of a whispered consultation, the chairman, on behalf of the magistrates, explained that though they pitied the prisoner's distress, they could not allow him to escape punishment altogether. Such crimes, he said, had lately been far too common, and must be stopped. They did not wish to be hard upon him, and, as nothing was known against him previously, the very lenient sentence of seven days' imprisonment with hard labour would be passed.

A wild, despairing wail followed these words; and as the man was removed from the dock, he saw his wife being carried insensible from the body of the court.

This small affair—for what are two or three broken hearts or blasted lives in comparison with a proper administration of justice?—this small affair being disposed of, the rioters were placed in the dock.

The case against them having been briefly opened, the facts with which the reader is already familiar were stated by various witnesses. Mr. Champley spoke to the damage done to his property, described the conduct of the crowd, and identified Potter as one of the most active ringleaders in the work of destruction. Howarth and Cagill, of whose arrest Briggs had heard, with two others, were seen taking part in the lawless proceedings by some of the Springside servants, as well as by some of the people from the mill who had followed the mob when it marched for the house. One of these latter spoke doubtfully as to Greg. Had seen a young man like him, but his face was smeared with blood, and he was not near

enough to see his features distinctly. Thought it was the prisoner Greg who was standing on the broken pillar, but would not swear to him.

"He's reet," whispered the people one to another.

"Ay, he'll get off," was the reply.

Hiram was standing with downcast head in the dock. Unlike his companions he had no feeling that he was a martyr in a glorious cause, no sense of being a hero in the popular view. He had seen Miss Wharton as soon as he was brought into court, and the consciousness of her presence made him feel the shame and degradation of his position all the more keenly.

When the last witness who was supposed to be available was told he might stand down Hiram cast one swift glance, half of triumph, at the bench. Mr. Wharton was leaving the chair, and amid a buzz and

murmur from all in court, Mr. Champley handed Miss Wharton down from the elevated position she had occupied and led her towards the witness-box.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT THE GREAT UNPAID SAID.

HER face was pale, resolute, and calm. A close observer would have noticed signs telling that the task before her was not an agreeable one ; but to the majority of persons in court, who, like the majority of persons elsewhere, were not close observers, she seemed cold and proud, and not at all reluctant to deepen the distress of him whose future possibly depended so greatly on her word. Their minds, no doubt, were prepared beforehand for the reception of this impression. For was not Miss Wharton one of a class whom they had come to look upon as their natural enemies—a class

whom they regarded as profiting unduly by the labours of the working man, and selfishly and determinedly averse to any concession by which they might lose and he might benefit?

But though the rough men who eyed her so curiously were by no means prepossessed in her favour, they could not resist the effect of her singular beauty. Her tall supple figure was shown to advantage by a fawn-coloured dress; her rich hair fell from beneath her bonnet in a mass of ringlets on each side of the face; but it was the fine eyes, full of expression hard to read, which attracted all attention when she raised them from time to time as she spoke. Every Lancashire man considers himself an acute judge of female beauty, and from time immemorial has cherished the idea that no county can in this particular vie with his own; and even Miss Wharton would have felt flattered could she have known the

approval accorded to her personal charms by the crowded occupants of the spectators' portion of the Millvale police-court.

In simple truth she appeared in her present position with no small reluctance. She entertained, however, a very profound contempt for many of the feelings—or, as she considered them, the prejudices and weaknesses of ordinary young-ladyhood. She did not see why they should not make an effort to escape from the narrowness and ineffectiveness which custom and tradition had fastened upon their lives, nor why they should shrink from duties which men were expected to discharge. She longed for action in a wider and, as she conceived, a nobler sphere than that usually allotted to women. Hence, when it had been put to her that her evidence might be necessary to bring an offender to justice, and that thus she might serve the cause of public order and safety, with something of proud disdain,

she put aside both her own shrinking from the disagreeable ordeal and the pity which might have made her content with the escape from his just deserts of one of the men whom she could not but regard as more misguided than malicious.

The oath was administered in the usual way, and though her voice was low, it was still so clear that every syllable of the words which she repeated after the clerk could be distinctly heard.

In reply to questions, she stated that she recognized in Hiram—whom she now remembered she had seen before—the young man who, in such a violent and excited manner, had addressed the rioters in front of Mr. Champley's house. Partly owing to the noise made by the men, partly to her own agitation at the time, she could not hear what he said. From his actions, which were very wild and vehement, she would judge that he was urging them on.

When she left the box, a buzz and whispering, like that which always follows the termination of a strain upon the attention of an audience, went round the court, and the magistrates put their heads together to compare notes. Almost before the policemen had had time to show their zeal by proclaiming silence, this conference was cut short by Mr. Stapleton. Elbowing his way through the closely packed spectators, he asked to be allowed to say a few words.

Something like an execration was heard from the part of the building where Isaac Briggs was watching the proceedings out of his deep-set eyes. But the people were too intent upon what the "big parson," as they called him, might have to say to notice Briggs.

Hiram gave the minister a look of quick and grateful hope, and received an encouraging nod in return. This was the first gleam of promise : perhaps he would be extricated

from the net which had been wound around his feet.

“What I have to say,” began Mr. Stapleton, after the usual formalities, “relates exclusively to the prisoner Greg. I have known him for a considerable period, and have had frequent opportunities of learning his opinion as to the plans and conduct of the local Chartists. He has been opposed throughout not only to any openly lawless or forcible proceedings, but to any line of action which might seem to tend in that direction. He has been averse to the idea of the ‘sacred month’ from the time that it was first revived, and tried yesterday morning to persuade the meeting to decide against it. After the meeting I was in his company, following the mob, until, after drawing the plugs at Springside Mills, they set out for Mr. Champley’s residence. There again he tried to divert the people from their intention, and fared badly at the hands of some

of them in consequence. I do not deny—nor would he deny—that he was present when the damage was done ; but I am convinced that, so far from being a participator in the wrong, he was doing his utmost to persuade them to refrain from any lawless act.”

After one or two questions, which elicited nothing of importance, Mr. Stapleton retired.

The chief constable made a few remarks, the magistrates whispered to their clerk and to each other, and their spokesman then proceeded to announce the decision at which they had arrived.

“ We have heard with interest,” he said, “ the statement made by Mr. Stapleton in favour of Greg, but in the face of the other evidence before us we do not see that it frees him from the charge brought against him in common with the other prisoners. We have nothing to do with any opinions which he

may have expressed on occasions prior to that with which we are immediately concerned. He may have been carried away by the influence and example of others, and thus led into a course which has unfortunately brought him under the hand of the law. The fact stands against him that he was seen among those who were committing a very grave offence, and, so far as appearances go, taking part with them. The representations which have been made to us on his behalf may, however, very properly be pressed at his trial. The case against the other prisoners is clear. They were seen in the act of destroying property, and were evidently officiating as leaders in this serious breach of the peace. It is unnecessary to say anything," addressing the prisoners, "as to the weighty nature of the crime alleged against you. We, however, have a duty to discharge, from which the condition of feeling prevalent among a certain section of the

public makes it imperative that we should not shrink. We do not intend that it shall go forth that the perpetrators of acts of violence and disorder can escape with impunity. The whole of the prisoners, therefore, will be committed for trial at the next assizes."

This decision, although not unexpected, produced what the newspapers call "a sensation" in court. Some of the onlookers thought that the magistrates were acting in a very cool and determined manner; others opined that they had not altogether escaped the panic with which some magistrates in neighbouring districts were undoubtedly touched, and that they were putting on an exceptionally bold front in consequence.

It is needless to record that the conclusion arrived at afforded Mr. Briggs the liveliest satisfaction, at least so far as it affected Hiram Greg.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLOTTE WHARTON IN HER PRIVATE CAPACITY.

THE first impression any one received upon entering Mr. Wharton's drawing-room was that of glass ; the second that of gilt. A large bay-window filled up nearly the whole of one side, and no expense had been spared in supplying mirrors and handsome picture-frames. Some of the occasional chairs, better adapted for being looked at than sat upon, were gilded ; the timepiece and the ornaments on the mantel were of ormolu ; even the fire-irons were mounted in the same material, as if steel alone were far too vulgar. There was, of course, an ample

supply of easy chairs and luxurious couches ; and on one of the latter Mrs. Wharton reclined, reading a novel between intervals of slumber.

People who knew Mrs. Wharton said of her that she had been a fine-looking woman. She would hardly have consented to her beauty being spoken of in the past tense ; and evidently still thought it worth her while to spend a considerable amount of time and care upon her dress. But it was not her beauty upon which she chiefly prided herself ; her manner was her glory. If the truth must be told we are bound to confess that in her early days she had learnt dress-making, not as a useful accomplishment, but with the full prospect of having to earn a living. Mr. Wharton, however, had rescued her from this truly awful degradation ; and placed her in a position to become one of the lights of Millvale society. She, accordingly, buried the past ; talked

with well-bred disdain of shopkeepers and that sort of people ; thought it low to know anything of the life of common folks ; cultivated a languid style of movement and speech—the real aristocracy are always languid, as everybody knows ; shuddered at enthusiasm ; and, in short, put as thick and brilliant a varnish upon the plebeian foundation of her nature as possible. But nothing great or worthy can be accomplished excepting at a corresponding cost ; and this varnishing process proved very exhausting. Mrs. Wharton had, in fact, expended her vitality in acquiring a lady-like bearing. The result was that she was limp both in mind and body. Still, candid judges, free from vulgar prejudices in favour of such ungenteel things as vigour and health, which are so low as to be within the reach of a ploughboy or a milkmaid ; judges whose minds are not biased on the side of natural feeling, and who are refined enough

to regard with a proper horror any approach to moral earnestness ; critics of this class must admit that the end in view justified the sacrifice. What object on earth can be more truly admirable than a woman who, in the interests of gentility, has so far suppressed herself that she never, by any possibility, betrays to the world the possession of a heart ? It is a sight for gods and men !

“ Mr. Henderson ! ” announced the servant, throwing open the door.

“ Ah, Alexander,” cried the lady in her most aristocratic tone, “ come and sit down near to me. Nobody has called for two days, and I am nearly bored to death.”

As she spoke she put aside her book, and rearranged the folds of her dress. It was not necessary to exert herself greatly for Alexander’s entertainment, because he was almost one of the family.

“ Now tell me the news,” she continued,

when her prospective son-in-law had taken his seat. "You can spare me a few minutes, I am sure, and then you shall go to Charlotte. What is there new in London?"

"Trade's bad——"

"Oh dear, don't talk of trade! You know I don't know anything about it."

"Well, Parliament——"

"Never mind Parliament."

"I was only going to say it is not sitting."

"Tell me about society. Did you go to the opera?"

"Opera? No. Don't care for it."

"I dote upon the opera. How could you go to town and know nothing when you return?"

"I went on business. Men must attend to these things, you see; though ladies, of course, don't take any interest in them."

A silence ensued, Mrs. Wharton being sufficiently annoyed to make her tap the book

lying by her side with one forefinger. This prospective son-in-law was very much wanting in polish, and was not nearly refined enough in his tastes to gratify the lady. He was, however, her husband's partner ; and though Mrs. Wharton ignored business as much as possible, she was obliged occasionally to recognize it as a disagreeable necessity—the source from which she derived her gilded drawing-room and her carriage and pair ; and she had a pretty shrewd suspicion that Mr. Henderson was a person of importance in the firm. Hence her opinion that the engagement between him and Charlotte was a tolerably satisfactory arrangement.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty or upwards, with a florid complexion, tawny hair and whiskers, pale-blue eyes ; and, when any but the most commonplace topics were under discussion, had a careful manner of choosing his words, indicated chiefly by an occasional hesitation, as if he

were calculating the exact force of the word he was about to employ.

"Fearfully hot weather," said Henderson at length.

"Dreadful ! And we are not able to get away from it as usual."

"No ; I suppose Mr. Wharton does not wish to leave home during the present condition of affairs in Millvale."

"He says he cannot go until these horrid people are quite quiet again."

"It would hardly be the thing, certainly."

"So we have not been able to go to the seaside. It really is most annoying to be kept at home at this time of the year."

"Very bad, indeed," assented Henderson, with difficulty suppressing a yawn.

He did not fully appreciate the trial endured by a delicate nature such as that of Mrs. Wharton, through being prevented from going to the seaside at the usual time. A more discerning person would have seen

in this circumstance food for reflection. Fate is not so capricious as she seems: if the workers of Millvale had to endure the pangs of hunger, Mrs. Wharton was crossed in a whim. What a beautiful instance of the law of compensation!

"Is Charlotte at home?" asked Henderson.

"Yes; she is in the library, I think."

"You'll excuse me, will you not?"

"Oh yes. Don't apologize at all. You are a fortunate young man to be at liberty at this time of day." This with an arch smile and in a tone of pleasant banter.

"Perhaps so. But I'd rather be at business."

"Dear, dear! Alexander, how ungallant you are."

"Well, I don't mean that exactly——"

"Then what do you mean, sir?"

"Why, that it would be better if all this disturbance had not taken place. It's a

great nuisance to have the mills standing. We are, however, no worse off than the rest. I am told that there is not a single mill running within fifty miles of Manchester on any side."

"It is very shocking, no doubt. And it is a great shame that those creatures should be allowed to act in such a manner. But there—I see you are impatient. You know the way to the library."

Henderson found Charlotte snugly ensconced in an easy-chair, with a number of books upon a table within reach of her hand. After the customary greeting, he took a seat, and glanced uneasily and suspiciously at the volumes with which Charlotte was employed. One was a treatise on the "Mystery of Suffering;" another was a volume of the acting edition of several modern plays, in which the tragic and comic element were pretty equally divided; a third was a Greek grammar. This was not

reassuring ; he could not tell what mine she might not spring upon him.

On the surface this large-limbed, florid-faced man appeared perfectly complacent and self-satisfied. This was the character with which he was usually accredited. He was, however, too clever to reap in full the benefits of self-esteem. Only a fool can do that. His abilities were considerable within a somewhat narrow range, and he did not undervalue them ; he was ambitious as to the power and position which money can give, and so far he had been not unsuccessful in what he had aimed at doing. But, as we have said in effect, his self-appreciation was not a flawless gem. A streak of mistrust ran through it. The flaw was not marked enough to force itself frequently upon his consciousness ; and, under ordinary circumstances, was productive of very little disturbance to his serenity. But he was vaguely sensible of it in Miss Wharton's

presence. She was morally and intellectually his superior ; and though he did not distinctly acknowledge this superiority to himself, it so far forced itself upon his mind when in contact with her as to render him not perfectly easy. He felt there was something in her which he could not fathom—something deeper and higher than he knew—and he failed utterly to wing an equal flight with her thoughts and aspirations. He tried to laugh himself out of this feeling as a fancy, and to persuade himself that the soarings of her mind were but the undisciplined imaginings of an impractical young lady. Still he could not rid himself altogether of the sense of his inequality, nor so push it into the background of consciousness as to escape altogether its perturbing effects.

Such we venture to think is a not uncommon experience with many apparently perfectly self-satisfied people. Hence the

liking which such persons so often display for the company of their social or mental inferiors, in which their supremacy is not likely to be brought into question.

Charlotte pushed the books from her, upon her lover's entrance, putting a mark between the leaves of the "Mystery of Suffering,"—the work she was reading when interrupted.

"Quite busy, as usual," he remarked.
"What are you puzzling at now?"

"I have worked a little at the Greek verb; then I studied a part in *The School for Scandal*—and I really believe I could play 'Lady Teazle,' if I had the chance!—then I was trying to understand the position which this writer takes with regard to pain."

"A pretty stiff piece of work for one morning, and for a girl, isn't it?"

"Why 'for a girl' more than for a man?"

"Ah, just so," said Henderson, evading the point she had raised, and trying to turn it off with a laugh.

“Like the rest of the lords of creation, I suppose you think girls ought to sink under burdens which only your Herculean shoulders are capable of sustaining.”

“Why, the fact is one does not usually find girls troubling their heads about such things.”

“So much the worse for the girls. No doubt it is as you say; but that does not prove that they are not competent to grapple with them when they try. Perhaps it is equally true that the majority of men don’t usually trouble their heads about such things.”

“Quite so; and why should they? Where’s the good of, say, Greek grammar, or fine theories about the mystery of suffering?”

“Perhaps they are no good in one sense—that is from the bread-and-butter point of view——”

“Which you must confess, my fair philosopher, is not without its own importance.”

"So also are an enlarged mind and broadened sympathies. I am not sure whether you will understand me or only laugh at me when I say that I seem sometimes to be suffering from mental suffocation."

"A case of overcrowding, I should say," laughed Henderson.

"No," returned Charlotte, smiling; "one may suffocate in a too highly rarefied atmosphere; and there is so little in the ordinary life of an English girl to supply breath to her higher faculties that sometimes it seems like being placed under an air-pump. You have seen, or at least heard of, the gentle-hearted experiment of putting a mouse into the receiver of one of these instruments, and then pumping off the air," continued Charlotte, in only a half-serious tone. "Don't you think the mouse—poor little creature!—would be glad to get away into the free atmosphere outside?"

"No doubt he would."

“Well—girls are so hedged about with proprieties, so much cut off by customs and prejudices from the larger life of the world, that they are in a very similar position.”

“What a horrible state of things!” said Henderson, with mock gravity. “Would you like the window open?”

“No, thank you. Listen for a moment, and then you may laugh as much as you like. While we are young we are expected to content ourselves with flimsy subjects usually taught in a flimsy manner at ‘seminaries’ or ‘establishments for young ladies;’ then comes the stage of dawdling over fancy-work, dressing, and flirting. Such is the style of most girls’ lives from day to day until marriage, which is supposed to be the climax of a woman’s life. From her wedding-day she must be a good wife and a helpmeet—as if she only lived for the sake of man, and had no independent being of her own. Really the pagan idea that women have no

souls seems still to continue ! For my part, I do not wonder that girls should long passionately to escape from such an existence of aimless trifling, and that they should take to the stage or anything else which will enable them to show what is in them, and to escape from their conventional bonds."


"By Jove, Charlotte, these are startling sentiments ! I shall not feel quite certain that your dislike for 'aimless trifling' will not lead you to neglect to put in an appearance on the happy day."

"That will depend, sir, upon how you behave yourself in the mean time," replied Miss Wharton, blushing.

"Well, I must do my best," returned Henderson. "I hope you won't desert me for the theatre, though."

"And why not ?"

"Because I don't wish to be deserted at all."



"But why specially object to the theatre?"

"For various reasons."

"Now, joking apart, do you not think that an actress's life offers many inducements to a woman?"

"To some women, perhaps."

"I think it must be delightful to be able, by training and study, to enter into some noble or heroic character—to so saturate your mind with the thoughts and feelings of the part that, for the time being, you lose the sense of your own individuality, and really *are* the person whom you try to represent. Think, too, of the power you have over other minds—how they enter into your joys and weep over your sorrows. I think that to have full sway over an audience for a single hour would be something worth living for."

"I am afraid your actress is more ideal than real. I never saw one yet who so far



lost her individuality as to forget her eyes, if she happened to have tolerably good ones."

Charlotte sighed. She saw that her lover treated these vague longings of hers very lightly. He leaned back in his chair, beating a gentle tattoo with his fingers on the table and looking at her meditatively. She was very beautiful, that he knew, and if he could not quite follow her fancies and vagaries time would tone her down and make her more practical. However this might be, she was a fine woman whom any man might be proud to see at the head of his table. With such reflections he consoled himself, though even by their means he could not entirely dispel the feeling that until the toning down process had taken place they were not very fitly matched.

When Alexander Henderson first came to Millvale to fill a position of trust in the firm of Wharton and Son, he used to see the

little Lottie at rare intervals when he was invited to his employer's house. He took no more notice of her than he would have taken of any other child, excepting to remark that she had a pair of exceptionally fine and expressive eyes. During the time she was at school, he, of course, met her still more infrequently ; and upon her return home for good, rather more than a year before this August afternoon, on which he was sitting feeling somewhat uncomfortable on account of her incomprehensibility, he was filled with both surprise and admiration by the sight of the tall and stately maiden who had developed from the little Lottie of the past.

He was of a cautious, not to say calculating, disposition by nature ; and this organ of caution had been amply exercised in business, with the result usual in such cases. Consequently, he was not of the type of men who fall in love, and who risk their whole

happiness upon the failure or success of their suit. But, with his eyes open, and all his wits about him, he walked as nearly into love as was compatible with his constitutional and acquired prudence. As we have said, he admired Miss Wharton; he was charmed by her beauty, and he liked her. He considered the affair in all its bearings, so far as he was able to grasp them, just as carefully, and pretty much in the same spirit, as he would have considered a trade contract, and finally decided to seek her for his wife.

He had made himself so useful, indeed, so indispensable, to Mr. Wharton, that the question of a partnership had been already mooted. A relative dying, opportunely, left him a substantial legacy; and investing this in the business he was able to enter the firm under most auspicious circumstances. Mr. Wharton having no other children, it seemed to Henderson peculiarly fitting that

he should marry the daughter of the head of the firm.

As for Charlotte, she was young, inexperienced, and impressionable; her affections were quite disengaged, and though he was not an ideal knight he succeeded in making himself so agreeable by his attentions and evident admiration that almost before she knew her own heart she was engaged.

Like other parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wharton failed to understand their child. Indeed, the importance of such an understanding never presented itself to their parental minds. They looked to external suitability only; and from this point of view Henderson was all that they could desire. His character was without reproach, and his prospects were good. Mrs. Wharton, though eminently refined, knew nothing of such refinements as disparity of disposition; and though, if fate had so willed it, she would

have preferred a son-in-law with higher connections than Henderson could boast, she made herself content with a man who had risen so far as to show that he had a capacity for rising in the world, and whose help her husband said he could not do without. With her approval and consent Mr. Wharton's were assured ; since he saw in his partner every quality which he could desire in a partner for his child. Neither father nor mother reflected that a barn-door fowl is all very good as far as it goes ; but that it would not be well to mate it with an eagle. Being only barn-door fowls themselves, they were not aware of the faculty for higher flights in the fledgling committed to their charge ; and had they been aware of any such thing they would have deemed it the best and wisest course to clip the pinions which might spurn the safe though lowly earth.

“I wonder,” said Charlotte, breaking the

silence, "whether there ever was such a prosaic age as this?"

"Is it prosaic?" asked Henderson, in the most prosaic of tones. "I thought we had plenty of poets, though I must confess they are not much in my line."

"I don't mean with respect to literature, but life."

"But what has poetry got to do with life?"

"Very little actually; it might have a good deal."

"I must confess I don't see it."

"Surely," said Charlotte, "there is a poetry of action as well as of speech. A deed of daring, a life devoted heroically to some great cause, is an acted epic."

"Ah, yes, if that's what you mean——"

"That is exactly what I do mean. But now in England where can you find anything of the sort? Men seem to give up their whole time and strength to getting

money and to spending it ; and there is very little that is either romantic or poetic in that ; and women have to mould their lives upon that of the men."

"My dear Charlotte," cried Henderson, laughing, "what would you have ? Would you, for instance, like to see me in a pair of white unmentionables, with a little blue cloak over my shoulder, a guitar in my hand, singing sentimental ditties under your window by moonlight, after the fashion of a Troubadour ? Or would you wish me to don a suit of chain armour, and with lance and shield set out for Palestine to do battle with the infidel ?"

Charlotte laughed at the pictures thus suggested ; but, becoming grave again, replied—

"No, but I should like to see men and women caring more for ideas—not looking upon the world as if it contained nothing but a shop and a dining-room——"

"Please, Miss Wharton, a young person would like to speak to you," said a servant, opening the door.

"A young person? Who is it?"

"I didn't ask the name."

"A lady or a gentleman?"

"Neither 'm. It's a young woman."

"Will you excuse me for a few moments?"

"Certainly; I'll join Mrs. Wharton in the drawing-room," replied Henderson, rising.

"We must finish our talk about this prosaic age at another time."

"Show the young woman in here," said Miss Wharton to the servant.

A moment later Helen Briggs was ushered into Charlotte's presence, the servant holding open the door with an air which plainly indicated that he considered attendance upon such a person a very condescending act indeed.

Henderson caught sight of the pathetic childlike face as it passed him in the hall,

and wondered what the special trouble was which had brought this girl to see the daughter of the mayor. There was something in the look which interested him.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARLOTTE AND HELEN.

THERE was no great difference in the ages of the two girls ; but this only served to heighten the contrast between them. Charlotte's tall, slender figure, clad so as to show its symmetry to the best advantage ; her white, shapely hands ; her face perfect in feature, undimmed by any care or anxiety ; her eyes shining with a light borrowed from an ideal realm ; Helen holding a faded shawl lightly around her shoulders, the fingers which grasped it thickened and scored by work in the mill ; dark lines under her eyes as if with weeping ; the lips trembling with dread or eagerness ;—such were the two people upon whom the servant cast a hasty

glance before he retired, shutting the door after him.

Helen gave one quick look upward into Charlotte's face, and burst into a passion of sobs.

"My poor girl," said Charlotte, relaxing her stately manner in a moment, "what is your trouble?" and as she spoke she gently moved Helen into a chair.

"Oh, my heart'll break, I'm sure it will," cried Helen, hiding her face with the corner of her shawl.

"Don't try to speak just yet," said Charlotte, "you will be better by-and-by." And she laid her hand soothingly upon Helen's shoulder. Helen started, almost shuddered, when she felt the touch.

Making an effort to control herself, Helen began—

"I came to ask you about—Hiram."

"Hiram?" repeated Charlotte, in a bewildered tone.

“Hiram—Hiram Greg,” returned Helen, more firmly.

“Ah, the young man who was among the rioters?”

“Ay, but who nivver did nought wrong.”

“Are you his sister?”

“Neaw.”

“You are——?”

“I’m Helen Briggs.”

“I see,” said Charlotte, in a low tone, while her eyes filled with sympathetic tears.

“But what can I do?”

“They say—feyther says—it’s a’ through you.”

“That what is through me?”

“That Hiram is i’ danger—oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?” and Helen again broke into convulsive sobs.

“But that is not true,” said Charlotte, still very gently. “I had no wish to do him any harm, and only did my duty.”

“Didn’t yo’ appear again’ him?” cried Helen, resentfully.

"Yes, but I was obliged to do that."

"Who obliged yo'?"

"You know that Hiram Greg was one of the rioters."

"Nay, he was nivver a rioter."

"But he was with those men at Mr. Champley's."

"Ay, but he was tryin' to persuade 'em to be quiet, an' to go hoam."

Charlotte, remembering the figure she had seen raised above the heads of the crowd, could have smiled at this assertion. She shook her head incredulously.

"I know he were," continued Helen, with unaccustomed vigour. "I know he didna want 'em to go at a', an' I'm sure he did nought wrong. An' yet he has to take his trial wi' th' others, an' feyther says he'll happen be sent away across th' sea. An' now Hiram 'll hardly show his face——"

"You have seen him, then?"

"Ay, who should if not me?"

“But I thought——”

“Yo’ thought he were i’ prison? But Mr. Stapleton bailed him out.”

The poor girl spoke of Mr. Stapleton and of his connection with Hiram with an air of manifest pride. In her simple heart she thought the minister’s friendship conferred great distinction on her lover; and she had herself such unquestioning reverence for Mr. Stapleton that she thought his approval of her lover’s conduct, and his belief in his innocence, ought to be sufficient to convince any unprejudiced person.

“I am glad of that. Let us hope,” said Charlotte, “that he will be able to prove his innocence at the trial.”

“You won’t appear again’ him, will yo’, Miss Wharton? My feyther said ’at Hiram would ha’ got clean off if yo’ hadn’t come forrard; an’ I’ve come to tell yo’ ’at he nivver did nought wrong, an’ to beg yo’ not to say aught again’ him. I’m a poor girl, an’

you're a lady, but just try to think how yo'd feel if Mr. Henderson were to be takken up for summat he nivver did, an' if yo' didn't know whether they'd put him i' prison or send him away where yo'd nivver see him again."

Charlotte was silent. She had only a few minutes ago been talking to her lover about acts of devotion. Had she not an example before her eyes? This girl, in her shabby gown and faded shawl, with an odour of mill grease hanging about her, had come to her inspired by a pure and earnest love to plead the cause of the man to whom she had given her heart. Her faith in him was blind; she was ignorant and commonplace; still her soul was filled with a noble emotion. She was naturally timid—that could be seen by the tremulous lip and the nervous movement of the fingers; and even a girl of a less shrinking disposition would, from very maidenly modesty, feel it no light task to

avow her relationship to a young man in Hiram's position. Charlotte could not help asking herself if she, with her fine notions about rising above the low level of ordinary life, would be able to act as nobly for Alexander Henderson, should circumstances make the demand upon her, as Helen was acting for her lover's sake? However, she must not be tempted to go off into dreams and speculations. The sight of Helen's tear-stained face and beseeching eyes recalled her to herself.

"I cannot tell you," she said, "how sorry I am for your trouble, but I fear I have no choice in the matter; the law will force me to appear, and I must tell what I saw."

"Can't we do nought to save him? Can't your feyther?"

"Perhaps papa might be able to give you some help or advice," said Charlotte, catching at the idea. "I'll see if he has come in."

Notwithstanding her very genuine distress,

when she found herself alone Helen could not refrain from glancing with something of awestruck curiosity around the room. Most persons who have passed through any deep affliction will know that it is not necessary for the mind to be quite disengaged in order for the attention to be attracted by objects or incidents in themselves trivial or ridiculous. Often, on the contrary, in the midst of our mourning we are struck by a piece of grotesqueness or absurdity which we should not have noticed under different circumstances ; we see something ludicrous about a person or thing, which before would have been no more suggestive of the comic than a death's head. We are at a loss to explain this mental phenomenon, and commend the question to the consideration of the philosopher. Such being the case with tolerably mature and well-ordered minds, there is the less wonder that Helen's mind should escape for a few moments from the absorption of its

distress. Her mind was not very mature, and was not very well ordered. Many of the characteristics of childhood were with her prolonged into womanhood ; and a child's sorrow always leaves room for curiosity. Its trouble is intermittent, and the strain of its anguish is liable to suspension at any moment. Let a child apparently engrossed in some affliction be left alone, by the withdrawal of the person who is for the time associated with the trouble, and its tearful eyes will wander from object to object, strange thoughts and fancies will suggest themselves to its mind ; but immediately upon the return of the companion, the tears will break forth afresh, and feeling will revert to the channel from which it had been diverted.

Helen glanced at the easy, leather-covered chairs, at the tables strewn with papers and books, at the oaken bookcases lining the walls from floor to ceiling, and thought how learned Miss Wharton must be from the mere

fact of living in such a place, and having nothing to do but to read all those hundreds of books all day long. She noticed also two large busts on brackets—the one of a man with a remarkably high forehead ; the other with a lower, broader brow and long hair. This latter was evidently blind ; and she wondered if, when the man whom it represented was alive, he used to be led about by a little dog, or whether he had servants to take him wherever he wanted to go ? Perhaps Mr. Wharton would not care to have the likeness of a poor man who had no more costly servant than a little dog.

“I am so glad you are come home, papa,” said Charlotte, as she entered the drawing-room.

“Were you afraid dinner would be delayed, my dear ?” inquired Mr. Wharton, jocosely.

“There is a poor young woman in the library in terrible distress,” replied Charlotte.

"Begging, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Wharton, languidly, as she rearranged the folds of her dress.

"No, indeed. She is connected with Hiram Greg, the Chartist, and she has come to ask if we cannot help him."

"Greg! He is a pretty object for help," exclaimed Mr. Wharton.

"She thinks that my testimony has placed him in his present position——"

"Well?"

"—— And she begged me not to appear at the trial."

"A very reasonable request, indeed!" remarked Mrs. Wharton. "I wonder what people of her class think of us. I trust you did not allow any of your romantic notions to lead you into making any foolish promises."

"No, mamma; I explained to her, of course, that I could not promise anything of the kind."

"Then what does she want ? Why does she not go away ?"

"I thought perhaps papa would see her, and tell her what would be best to do."

"Really, I don't see how I can do anything of the kind. Did you say she is young ?"

"Yes, almost a child."

"Greg's sister ?"

"No."

"Umph ! sweetheart ?"

"Yes, papa."

"What does she expect ?"

"I think the poor thing has some idea that you have almost unlimited power."

"Which is a very mistaken idea," said Mr. Wharton, pulling up his shirt-collar, and looking as important as possible ; "very mistaken. Yes ? yes."

"However, you will see her, papa. Come," and she took him by the arm, and led him reluctantly out of the room.

"This, you see," remarked Mrs. Wharton, throwing herself back in her seat with an air of the utmost fatigue, "is one of the penalties of position."

"Dreadful!" returned Henderson; and Mrs. Wharton did not remark the touch of sarcasm in his tone.

"Well, my good girl," said Mr. Wharton, as Helen rose, with a start, upon the appearance of the portly chief magistrate, "what can I do for you?"

"I want Hiram to be set free," said Helen, bluntly, choking back her sobs.

"Ah!" ejaculated the mayor, reflectively, "my daughter has told me what has passed between you; and I am afraid the law must take its course. The young man is out on bail, I think?"

"Ay, an' will hardly go out o' doors for shame."

"And he has friends?"

"Mr. Stapleton is his friend, an' ivvery body else 'at knows him."

“Before the trial takes place, then,” continued Mr. Wharton, “he will have both time and opportunity to prepare his defence; but I can do nothing in the matter—absolutely nothing. Yes? yes.”

“Then I mut go,” said Helen, with a shiver, as she drew her shawl closely around her shoulders.

Charlotte gently detained her, while her father, after an awkward “good day,” withdrew.

“You had better rest for a little while,” she said, kindly.

“I don’t want to rest,” cried Helen, half angrily, half tearfully.

“Let me give you a glass of wine. It will do you good.”

“Aught from your hand ’d choke me. Let me go.”

And Helen left the house.

Charlotte stood a moment meditating on Helen’s love and sorrow, wondering, in a

vague kind of way, what the author of the "Mystery of Suffering" would have had to say of this particular instance, especially if the young man after all should be innocent. Suppose that what this girl and Mr. Stapleton both affirmed were true, and that notwithstanding he should be convicted and punished chiefly through her testimony? She could not endure the thought, and rejoined the trio in the drawing-room.

"The person has gone?" remarked her mother, interrogatively.

"Yes, mamma."

"I hope dinner will be punctual," said Mr. Wharton, cheerfully. "It's just three minutes off due."

"You're not going, Alexander?" said the elder lady, with surprise, as Henderson rose and held out his hand.

"Yes, I must."

"Better have some dinner," remarked the host. "Charlotte, have you nothing to say

to this young man about wanting to run away."

"Please excuse me. I have an engagement, which I have only just remembered."

"Well, my boy, you may go further and fare worse. But if you have an engagement it can't be helped. Ah, there's the bell. Punctual to the minute. Good-bye, good-bye."

Miserable and indignant, Helen hurried down the short avenue which formed the approach to Mr. Wharton's house. This visit, which she had undertaken without consultation with any one, had cost her no small effort. Should it come to her father's knowledge she knew that he would be most angry at such a defiance of his authority. Even as to Hiram she was not quite certain beyond this—that he would have done all in his power to prevent her seeking a favour from either Miss Wharton or her father on his behalf. She had said not a word of her

project. She had certainly gone with no small degree of hope. Now the hope was dashed to the ground, and she had utterly failed.

She dreaded to go home in her excited state of mind, and with her eyes red and swollen. These marks of distress would be sure to call forth questions from her father which she would find it difficult to answer, even if her absence from home were not made the subject of disagreeable inquiry. She determined to go to Birk's Cottage, and there rest awhile; and if on her arrival at home she mentioned that she had been there her father would be satisfied.

A narrow lane, opening out of the road into which the avenue had brought her, was the nearest way to that part of the town in which lived the Misses Fry. High hedges ran along each side, the trees near the junction with the road being white with the dust raised by the summer wind. Further

from the dusty highway the leafy walls were clear and glossy, with here and there a branch of white or blushing bramble-blossom showing like a cluster of stars, half hidden in a cloud. A number of fowls, strayed from a farmyard near, were reveling in the earth which they found at the foot of the embankment—taking a dry bath of dirt, so to speak—or pecking among the grass with as serious an air as if they were in search of some inestimable treasure; or simply strutting about, clucking to each other with an air of complacent contentment. A thrush, hidden in some shady retreat, poured forth his mellow note. But Helen, unheeding, passed on with a quick and silent step.

Presently the hedge on one side ceased, and a low rail fence enabled the passer-by to obtain a wider view. Here, too, the lane began to dip downwards into a valley, and the prospect from this point was one of the

prettiest in the neighbourhood. Helen had begun to feel the reaction consequent upon the excitement she had undergone, and also to feel somewhat wearied with her rapid walk. More from the desire to rest than from any wish to enjoy the scene, she stood, leaning with one hand upon the rails.

In the field close to her feet half a dozen cows were browsing or lazily chewing the cud. Further away a brook, gilded by the sunlight, crept dreamily past the scattered trees along its banks; and beyond the brook the ground rose almost precipitously, clothed with trees and bushes. To the right the valley broadened out, and mills and houses closed in the view.

She had not been standing longer than two or three minutes, thinking more of her own affairs than of the prospect before her, when she heard a quick tread in the lane. Looking round she recognized Mr. Henderson. In another moment he was by her side.

"Excuse me," he began, with a little hesitation in his manner, "but I have just come from Mr. Wharton's."

"Ay, I saw yo' there," she said indifferently, and looking listlessly away to the shining brook. Suddenly turning upon him, with a gleam of hope lighting up her face—"Happen they've changed the'r minds, an' 'll help Hiram?"

"I have no such good news. Indeed, I left almost as soon as you did."

"Then what do yo' want?" she asked simply, with an air of abject weariness.

"I heard from Miss Wharton the substance of what passed between you, and I was very sorry for you."

"Well?" queried Helen, as firmly as she could; her lip beginning to tremble like that of a child on the verge of an outburst of tears.

"I thought perhaps I might help you; give you some advice; or you might want money to employ a lawyer."

"Yo're gradely kind," said Helen, losing the distrustfulness of her previous manner. "I don't want aught for mysel', an' Hiram has Mr. Stapleton to talk to. I doubt whether Hiram 'd take money thro' yo' even for a lawyer."

"But you'll let me be your friend; and perhaps we shall be able to help Greg without wounding his feelings."

Helen looked gratefully and confidingly up into his face; and though her countenance was disfigured by recent tears, he found the look not unpleasant.

"Are you going home at once?" he asked.

"Neaw; I am going to Birk's Cottage. Yo' know Bridget an' Molly Fry, don't yo'?"

"I should think I do, and have done for many a year. Suppose we walk on."

He talked pleasantly and cheerfully on various familiar subjects within her compre-

hension ; and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her face brighten, and even of hearing her give utterance to a gentle laugh.

“Do you often go to Birk’s Cottage ?” he said, when, after leaving the lane and crossing some fields, they were about to emerge into a more public road.

“Ay, once or twice a week—a’most ivvery Sunday afternoon. They’re allus glad to see me.”

“I must try to see them oftener than I have done lately. Perhaps I shall meet you there sometimes, and shall then hear how you are getting on ?”

“Happen yo’ will. “I’d like yo’ to know a’ abeaut Hiram.”

And she looked up to him with perfect trust in her eyes, as they shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XIV.

WAITING.

UNPERCEIVED by Hiram his mother was present in the court during the proceedings before the magistrates. At their close, filled with a strange delight, she hurried home, having left her dead sister's children locked up in the house. She knew no anxiety for the fate of her son, the one absorbing thought being that he had not, out of either fear or prudence, deserted his own class and acted as the friend of the party which she regarded with such fierce and implacable hate. She could have blessed Miss Wharton when she stepped forward and testified to what Mrs. Greg regarded as Hiram's laudable behaviour.

After his committal, Hiram's detention in custody was short. Mr. Stapleton, at first almost stunned by the magistrates' decision, soon roused himself to action, and, in a little while, offered himself and a friend as bail.

Dejected, indignant, and ashamed, the young man left his cell. The minister kept by his side as he walked home, trying to cheer him and give him hope.

"This is not the end," he said, "and a jury will never convict on the evidence laid before the magistrates."

"But who knows what other evidence will be brought?" replied Hiram, bitterly. "A man charged wi' bein' a Chartist has a poor chance. Others have been convicted on less evidence than this again' me. What can yo' do when judges, an' juries, an' ivverybody is set upo' convictin' yo' through the'r fear o' th' very name o' Chartist?"

"Well, your own conscience is free," said

Mr. Stapleton, "and we will leave no stone unturned to make your innocence clear to all the world."

"It's a comfort *you* know it," replied Hiram.

"We must have the best legal advice we can get," pursued Mr. Stapleton, "so that your defence shall not fail through lack of skill."

"But lawyers don't give advice wi'out pay."

"There'll be no difficulty on that score. We'll see to that in good time."

Hiram was almost too dispirited to discuss the question at present, and Mr. Stapleton seeing this, when they neared the street in which he lived, bid him good-bye, promising to see him again in the course of a day or two.

"Yesterday was a hard day, and you are tired," he said at parting. "You need rest, and then you will be able to look affairs bravely in the face."

When Hiram opened the door, his mother was busy serving up a mess of oatmeal porridge for the children's dinner. The two little ones laughed and clapped their hands when they saw him, and ran to him, clinging about his knees.

"Hiram!" cried Mrs. Greg, "ha' they let thi out?"

"Ay," he answered wearily, and, telling the children to finish their dinner, he threw himself into a chair.

"I thought they'd locked thee up for good."

"I'm out on bail," he returned.

"I'm proud on thi this day!" cried his mother.

"Ther's a deal to be proud on," he said, with bitter irony.

"Tha were noan a coward," she continued, triumphantly. "Tha didna turn again thi own side, an' tak' part wi' tyrants an' bloodsuckers. I heard that lass o'

Wharton's tell how tha hounded 'em on——”

“Mother,” said Hiram, sternly, “let's ha' no more o' this. Yo're givin' me credit for what I don't deserve.”

“My lad stood his ground wi' th' best,” she proceeded, not heeding, or misunderstanding, his disclaimer. “Here, my lad, tha mut be hungry. Have some porridge. Ther's nought better i' th' heause, or tha should have it.”

“I can't ait,” he said, impatiently. “Once for a', mother, I tell yo' I'm charged unjustly an' fausely wi' sharin' i' this business. I tried my best to stop it, an' I'd do th' same again if it were to do o'er again. I don't want to be praised for what I have not done, an' what 'd be a waur shame to me nor bein' ‘committed.’ I've enough to bear wi'out that.”

His mother stared at him as if she were stupefied. The thought actually flashed

across her mind that his brain was slightly deranged. But before she could speak he walked upstairs and threw himself down upon his bed, where, after lying for nearly an hour disturbed by gloomy thoughts, he fell into a heavy sleep.

The days of suspense and waiting were slow and weary. Any period of waiting seems to drag out to an unnatural length. It was with the greatest difficulty that Hiram could be induced to leave the house. He occasionally met for consultation Mr. Stapleton and the lawyer who was engaged to prepare his defence, and he saw Helen sometimes at Birk's Cottage; but from Heather Street he kept carefully away.

As he sat in the house, brooding and silent, his mother would look at him, marvelling at the change which a short time had wrought; while the two children who used to find in him a willing partaker in their games, regarded him with grave faces,

and in his presence whispered at their play.

Though not without hope of being able to vindicate his character, as the weeks drew on and the date of the assizes approached, he still deemed it necessary to prepare for the worst. He could make no provision for his mother, beyond a very trifling sum which he had saved; but though the thought of such a thing being necessary was not a pleasant one, he knew that she could earn a bare subsistence in the mill, should his absence from home be protracted. Besides his mother he had to consider Helen. He had no doubt of her constancy and truth, and her faith in him was one of his chief consolations. But if his worst fears were realized, he knew that she would have a sad burden to bear. He had made a resolution, if convicted, not to return to Millvale; and though he did not think it necessary to announce this resolu-

tion, he decided that both for the sake of Helen and for his mother's sake, it would be best under the circumstances to inform the latter of his engagement. Perverse as his mother was with reference to the question of his guilt, she, next to Helen, was the one person in the world to whom he was dearest. Perhaps if he were separated from them for months or years the two women would find comfort in each other, their bond of sympathy being their love for him.

"Mother," he said, one evening, when they had been sitting for some time without speaking, "I've summat to tell yo'."

"Well, lad?"

"Yo' know Isaac Briggs's lass?"

"Helen?"

"Ay!"

"What abeaut her?"

"We made it up last June?"

Mrs. Greg made no answer. A light had dawned upon her mind. This was the

explanation of Hiram's unheroic unwillingness to suffer with the rest. Men in love are not the readiest candidates for martyrdom. Such was the substance of her ruminations. She did not wish Hiram to be punished ; but she preferred the danger of punishment to the idea of his apostacy ; and, though it was not very logical on her part, her heart softened towards him, now that she was able to cling to her cherished notion that he had taken part in the riot, and, at the same time, to account for his protestations of innocence. She was not troubled by any consideration touching the moral crookedness of the conduct her theory supposed ; and as she shrewdly said nothing of her hypothesis it remained with her to give her what comfort it could impart. Mayhap hers was not the only pretty theory to which the darkness was safer than the light.

“ Would yo' like to see her ? ” asked Hiram, after a pause.

"I don't object," returned his mother ; a form of words which Hiram took as conveying a cordial assent.

So one afternoon, he brought Helen, and his mother kissed her, and Helen from that time felt at liberty to come and talk to Mrs. Greg whenever she had the opportunity.

It was soon rumoured in the town that the local Chartists intended raising a fund for the defence of Potter and his followers, and, as Hiram was one of the party, and as, moreover, it was likely all the accused would be tried on one indictment, those concerned decided that Hiram should share the benefits of this provision. The project was named to him first by Mr. Stapleton ; but Hiram at once refused to be associated even to this extent with the persons of whose guilt he was but too well aware, and eagerly grasped at Mr. Stapleton's hint that he could demand "to sever" at the time of the trial. He repeated his refusal in no very grateful terms

when the chairman of the Chartist committee called upon him to formally acquaint him with the action which was being taken.

As he became more accustomed to looking his situation in the face he lost something of the resentful gloom to which at first he seemed to yield, and bore himself with a stern patience which might have been taken for indifference. This hardness of manner was, however, broken down one day by an unexpected event.

Though he had so carefully avoided Heather Street, the Heather Street people had not forgotten him. They were not the kind of people who remember their friends only when they are prosperous, or when they can be of use, and they looked upon it not so much as a duty, but as a matter of course and a right, to hold out to such a helping hand in case of need.

It was on a Sunday afternoon that a knock came to the door, and, before it could be

opened, the latch was lifted, and Schofield Dawson and Doctor Wood walked in. Hiram shook hands with them and pointed each to a seat.

"We're a deppytation," said Dawson as he seated himself.

"A deputation?" said Hiram in perplexity.

"Yes, lad," said Doctor Wood, a prim little man in spectacles. "We had a meetin' to-day. Indeed, for th' matter o' that we've had several——"

"We thought tha'd want a bit o' brass," broke in Dawson.

——"And it were decided," said Dr. Wood, in a severe manner, "that we should——"

"So we agreed," continued Dawson, ignoring his companion, and impatient of his more precise speech, "to get up a weekly contribution for thy benefit; an' we thought it 'd happen relieve thi mind if we tell't thi

at once. Ther'll be enough to help thi i' thi trouble, an' may it help thi eaut on't."

Hiram looked from one member of the deputation to the other for a moment and burst into tears.

"We'd better go," said Dr. Wood.

"Let's be off," assented Dawson.

And before Hiram knew what they were about they were in the street. Dawson Schofield blew his nose a good deal, and Dr. Wood blinked his eyes behind his spectacles; but neither thought there was any sign of unmanliness in Hiram's way of receiving their communication.

So, with some gleams of sunlight, these trying days of waiting wore away, and the day of the trial came at last.

CHAPTER XV.

A CURIOUS FRIENDSHIP.

"THIS is a queer world," said Miss Fry, reflectively, pausing in the act of stirring her tea, and looking fixedly across the table at Helen, "a queer world!"

"Th' world's reet enow; it's th' fowk in it 'at's queer," responded her sister.

"I can't make Isaac out at a'," pursued the elder sister. "It seems he could clear Hiram wi' a word, an' yet he won't speak it."

And the little lady shook her head and her best Sunday cap in perplexity.

"I'd *make* him appear an' say summat if I were Hiram," said Molly, emphatically.

"As well as I can make out, he were near to Hiram when, as they say, Hiram were egging them foo's on ; an' he knows what were really said. If he were on his oath, he'd be forced to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, an' nothing but the truth,' an' that's a' 'at Hiram wants. Th' law's strong enow to force him to do that, ony way."

Miss Molly drew herself up, and nodded her head, as if pluming herself on the wisdom and penetration displayed in her remarks. The quotation from the legal form she considered particularly conclusive.

"Hiram doesn't want to force him to speak at th' trial," said Helen.

"Why not?" cried Molly, sharply. "He's not much need to think abeaut hurtin' thi feyther's feelin's. They're noan so delicate as that comes to."

"Molly!" said her sister, warningly. "I wouldn't talk to Helen i' that 'n."

"Why not?" repeated the younger spin-

ster. "I mean it, an' what I mean I say. Tha thinks th' same if tha'd only let it out."

"Some things is best unsaid to some fowk," returned Miss Fry, accompanying her words by sundry nods and frowns.

This moral precept, the truth of which no one less hardy than Molly will be found to dispute, apparently failed to convince that talkative person. She was about to argue the point in her own vigorous way when Helen interposed by answering the question addressed to herself.

"Hiram thinks he can do well enow wi'out feyther. He an' Mr. Stapleton an' all think they have plenty o' witnesses."

"I'd be sure," said Molly. "It's better to be sure nor sorry."

"Ay," assented Miss Fry, "it's better to lock th' stable door before th' horse is stolen."

"Then Hiram thinks it'd make feyther mad to have to tell a' th' truth."

“Let him be mad then,” cried Molly.

“Happen it’d get him into trouble if he had to tell ’at he were on th’ spot, an’ what he were doin’ theere,” said Miss Fry. “Still I’ve allus understood ’at no mon is bound to answer questions ’at might criminate hissels, as th’ lawyers say.”

“I don’t know,” replied Helen. “But if he had to appear i’ Liverpool he’d be waur set again’ Hiram nor he is.”

“That’d break no bones,” retorted Molly. “Besides, it’d be hard work to be awkkarder nor he is.”

“So it would,” chimed in Miss Fry.

“He’s very hard on me sin’ he found out abeaut Hiram. He really seems to think ’at I wish him some ill, because I’m fond o’ Hiram, and when he’s at home there’s hardly ony peace. He finds fau’t wi’ ivverything I do ; an’ he snaps me up ivvery time I open my mouth. He’s allus jealous when I go out, lest I should see Hiram, just as if he

thought we should be plottin' mischief again' him, though I'm certain nought could be further from our thoughts."

"I'm sure it couldn't," said Miss Fry, making the flowers on the top of her cap tremble in her effort to repress her indignation.

"That comes o' havin' a uneasy conscience," cried Molly. "*I'd* like to have a bit o' talk wi' him."

"What would tha say?" asked her sister, smiling at her warmth of manner.

"Nivver mind!" retorted Molly, as if Miss Fry were the offender.

"I don't think he'd mind," said Miss Fry quietly.

"I'd tell him a thing or two! I'd stir him up! I'd let him see what fowk think of him. That's a'!"

"Mother talked to him at first as sharp as onybody could," said Helen; "but he only got into a passion, an' now he's allus at

it. It makes us fair miserable." And Helen wiped her eyes.

"Well," said Miss Fry, "when things get to th' worst yo' may expect a turn. Come, Molly, let's clear these things away."

While she spoke she was putting the cups together; and she and her sister quickly cleared the table and put the room to rights.

The three then drew their chairs round the lattice window, although the out-look was not nearly so pleasant as on the June afternoon when the two old maids first learned of Helen's engagement. The autumn winds had begun to strip the trees, and each time the breeze swayed the branches a few stray leaves fluttered slowly to the ground, and then rolled edge-wise along the path till they found a sheltered nook where they might rest in peace. The glory of the wall-flowers was departed, and the tints of decay were robbing the plants of their summer green.

The Misses Fry and Helen, however, were not thinking of these things, though unknown to themselves their reflections may possibly have been tinged by the sombre hues of the little prospect which the garden afforded.

“That grand scheme didn’t come to much,” said Miss Fry, after a pause.

“Which?” said Molly.

“The ‘sacred month,’ as they ca’d it.”

“It turned out as Hiram tell’t ’em it would,” said Helen. “They didna stop work for a month.”

“Neaw,” chimed in Molly, “all the Millvale hands had gone back to th’ mills afore th’ end of August. They ought either to ha’ done more or naught.”

“They were only like fowk i’ other towns,” said Miss Fry in apology for the Millvale people. “I’m tell’t it were th’ same i’ Bolton, an’ Preston, an’ Oldham, an’ i’ places outside o’ Lancashire as well.”

“That’s true,” retorted Molly; “but two wrongs don’t make one reet. That sum won’t add up. But who’s that coming?” she added, as the garden gate creaked on its hinges, and a step was heard on the path. “Why, I declare, it’s Mester Henderson!” she cried, as he came within her range of sight.

It was fortunate for Helen that the two elderly spinsters had their attention engaged, or they might have noticed the blush which mounted her neck and tinted her pale cheek. They, good souls, doubted not that the visit was meant for themselves—Helen more than suspected that Henderson had come to Birk’s Cottage for the purpose of seeing her.

Since the day on which she made her fruitless appeal to Miss Wharton she had encountered Henderson several times. She had then mentioned incidentally that it was her custom to spend nearly every Sunday afternoon at Birk’s Cottage. Sometimes she

met him as she went there ; sometimes as she returned home, if she were alone, as happened once or twice. Or he would come to the house, as on the present occasion, ostensibly to make a call upon his old landladies ; but really to talk with Helen about her anxieties respecting her lover. She felt that it was very good of him to feel and to show such an interest in the affairs of a young man who certainly belonged to a class different from his own ; and he was always so kind in his manner towards herself that she could not think of him without gratitude.

She was, it is true, slightly disturbed by the fact which she only half perceived that he used the Misses Fry and her connection with them as a veil to conceal his communications with herself ; but then, if she were to see him, this approach to deception was necessary, and no one was harmed by it. Indeed, her friends at Birk's Cottage derived

pleasure from seeing Mr. Henderson more frequently than they had done for a year or more, so that she really need not make herself uncomfortable on their account.

The feeling which had led her to declare, when he first made an offer of assistance, that she did not believe that Hiram would accept any pecuniary help from him, had prevented her all along from mentioning the matter to her lover. Nor could she have done so without at the same time confessing how she first became acquainted with him. This would have involved a further confession of her appeal to Miss Wharton, and she knew Hiram well enough to be fully aware that he would view her action on that occasion with serious displeasure.

But though Mr. Henderson's tender of assistance had come to no practical result, Helen felt that he was some one upon whom she could rely in case of need, and to her childlike and dependent nature the reflection

that she had such a stay in reserve was very welcome.

As for Mr. Henderson, the interest which he had felt in the pale, troubled face which he had seen in Mr. Wharton's hall, and which afterwards was turned towards him with grateful confidence in the lane, increased the oftener he saw it. Helen was a girl, and she was in sorrow. Surely it was laudable, rather than the reverse, to be concerned in her affairs, especially when he entertained the laudable desire of rendering her what aid occasion should require. Philanthropy is pleasing when the object is a young woman not decidedly ugly, and when the benevolent person is a man not quite old enough to be her father. It is productive of a double pleasure—the pleasure which comes of doing good by stealth, and another pleasure which the person concerned is not quite so ready to acknowledge to himself. Perhaps there is danger connected with it,

but only such danger as a man who is sure of himself can regard without alarm.

There was, however, a still further element in the curious friendship which had been established between Helen and Henderson, which helped to make his philanthropy agreeable. He would have ridiculed the idea of there being any contrast in his mind between the mill girl and the mayor's daughter if it had been put broadly before him in words. But, as we have said before, he was conscious of Charlotte's superiority in point of character to himself; and, on account of the incompleteness of his vanity and of his love of supremacy among his associates, this consciousness disturbed his ease and serenity in her presence. But so far as Helen was concerned the case was quite different. She was weak and childish he knew, and he felt that his mind was a tower of strength compared with hers. Gulliver was humiliated by the sense of his

own diminutive stature when he found himself among a race of giants ; and it was no doubt very flattering when the Liliputians looked up with wonder at his enormous bulk. And Henderson found it very gratifying to have Helen gazing at him as if he were a being of a different order from herself ; evidently believing in his goodness and disinterestedness with all the simple faith of her heart ; speaking to him with timid respect ; listening to him when he spoke with a deference which forbade all question. To such a man such behaviour was decidedly attractive, and helped to render his philanthropy less irksome than it might have been in circumstances easily imaginable.

Henderson received a warmly demonstrative welcome from Miss Fry and Molly, and a timid one from Helen, who felt as if she were taking a liberty when she shook hands with the visitor. Seated in the easy-

chair he chatted easily for some time on indifferent topics ; but it was inevitable that the one subject which occupied the minds of the others should at length come forward for discussion.

“What do you think about Hiram Greg?” Molly asked him blankly, as soon as a break in the conversation gave her the opportunity.

“About his chances at the trial, I suppose you mean?” he replied.

“Ay.”

“I think there is no ground for fear,” he returned, with a quick look at Helen, “if his defence is properly managed. A good deal depends on that.”

“That’ll be a’ reet,” said Miss Fry, in her quietly positive manner.

“Mr. Stapleton ’ll see to that,” said Molly, “an’ nob’dy could do it better.”

“He is fortunate in having such a friend,” said Mr. Henderson, “and no doubt he will

get all necessary assistance and advice. I hope there will be no shortness of money."

"Mr. Stapleton an' Heather Street 'll take care to find enough," remarked Molly. "The Heather Street fowk 'd do aught for Hiram Greg."

"I spoke to Miss Briggs on the subject some time ago," said Henderson, "and I should have felt it a privilege to contribute any amount if she would only have persuaded the young man to accept my offer."

"It were no use tryin'," said Helen.

"Hiram's Lancashire, an' yo' know what that means," said Molly. "Lancashire fowk are as independent as independent"—no other simile at the speaker's command could have been so forcible as this—"an' they'd rather dee nor take aught from fowk they don't like. Not as Hiram has ought again' yo' special, but he thinks yo're a measter. I like the'r independence," continued Molly, with a toss of her head,

"I'm i' that way mysel'; but fowk 'at don't know 'em thinks it's ungracious. Why, Mester Charlton used to say 'at they didn't know th' difference between independence an' impudence; an' Mester Skinner, who came from th' south——"

"Never mind Mester Skinner," interjected Miss Fry, anxious to cut short her sister's harangue.

"I don't mind him. Not I, indeed!" exclaimed Molly; "I were only going to say——"

"Let Mester Skinner be for once," said her sister.

Henderson laughed, and Molly's rising anger vanished. He had witnessed many a little tilt between the two, and knew that when once Molly had made up her mind to have her say she would have it, unless some diversion took place.

"We shall know the result of the trial in a very few days," he said, as he rose to go.

"I wish I could go to Liverpool," Helen said, earnestly; "I don't know what I shall do till I hear how he's gotten on."

"He'll be back sharp enow to tell thi, lass," said Miss Fry, referring to Hiram.

"Yo'll be goin', I reckon, Mr. Henderson?" Molly said.

"Yes, I shall go. And if Miss Briggs will allow me I will send her word immediately the result is known; it might save an hour or two of suspense."

"Yo're gradely kind," said Helen.

And with this understanding Henderson departed.

Philanthropy was very pleasing—especially as, so far, it had not been expensive.

CHAPTER XVI.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY ?

IN the year 1838, Daniel O'Connell handed the Charter to Lovell, and it became henceforward the symbol round which the hitherto scattered forces of Radicalism rallied into a party of more or less coherence. It was adopted with enthusiasm by vast numbers throughout the country as a concise expression of their wishes and demands. From that time down to the date of our story the country was kept in a continual ferment by the vigorous and frequently threatening agitation which the Chartists maintained. The immense meetings, the gigantic torchlight processions which they promoted ; the fiercely eloquent declama-

tion, the passionate and warlike language in which many of them indulged, shook the nerves of the respectable and well-to-do classes, who had most reason to fear their wrath. Nor was such fear altogether groundless. As any one familiar with the history of this period is well aware, the most serious outbreaks of popular fury resulted from the excitement which was engendered. Early in the year following the promulgation of the Charter, the mob in Birmingham, according to the Duke of Wellington, wrought as much mischief as he had ever seen perpetrated by hostile troops in a town taken by storm. Later in the same year an attempt was made at Newport to release Henry Vincent from prison, and resulted in the death of ten of the rioters and in the wounding of at least fifty more. In other places risings of a less serious nature took place. These events taken in connection with the proposal for the observance of the

“ sacred month,” which was now first broached, and with the almost revolutionary feeling which animated vast numbers of the people, thoroughly alarmed the Government of the day, and severe measures of repression were adopted. Frost, Jones, and Williams, the leaders of the Newport rioters, were sentenced to death ; but this sentence was mercifully softened into one of transportation for life. Shortly after the outbreak in which they were concerned, nearly four hundred persons who had become prominent in the movement were arrested, and many of them sentenced to lengthened terms of imprisonment. This stern treatment cowed the spirits of the Chartists for a time, and produced a temporary lull in the agitation, which led to the pleasing conclusion that it was about to die out altogether. But the widespread alarm which had been experienced was rekindled in the year of which we write. Vast meetings again began to

assemble both in London and the provinces ; the project of a protracted national strike was revived ; riots took place in the mid-lands and the north ; speeches were made inciting to the employment of physical force, and a belligerent address was issued by the executive of the National Charter Association, in which the God of Battles was invoked to aid the people's cause. This resuscitation of the movement, which, to the eyes of many, seemed like an incipient insurrection, reawakened the terror of the authorities ; and in some cases the prevailing panic ran into injustice, producing too great a readiness to convict persons charged with using seditious language, or participating in the disturbances of public order which occurred. By this means was brought about the punishment of some, if not many, poor Chartists, who, in a calmer state of the official mind, would have been dealt with far more leniently and far more wisely.

Such being the existing condition of feeling, it followed as a matter of course that the trial of the Millvale Chartists was looked upon with warm interest, not only by the Millvale people, to many of whom they were personally known, but also by a great number throughout the district, and more particularly in Liverpool, where the assizes were held. This was made manifest by the crowded state of the court when the proceedings commenced. It followed also, equally as a matter of course, that the prisoners should have but slight hopes of acquittal, and that they should feel tolerably certain of receiving a heavy sentence in case of conviction. Even Hiram, as the decisive moment drew near, felt the most painful forebodings; and prior to leaving Millvale had bidden Helen and his mother good-bye, as if he expected the separation to be a long one, and it was with a quickly beating heart that he looked round upon the crowd when,

along with his fellow-prisoners, he was placed in the dock.

The case being in reality a very simple one, he had decided to conduct his own defence, aided by the advice of the solicitor with whom he had been in communication since his committal by the magistrates. The other men who were charged with him were represented by counsel, retained on their behalf by their political friends.

The prisoners were arraigned in the usual manner, and in due course the officer of the court read the indictment in which Mason Potter, Webb Howarth, Peter Cagill, Henry Perks, Martin Simpson, and Hiram Greg were all charged together with sharing in the riot at Millvale. Without any hesitation all pleaded "Not guilty," with the exception of Hiram. Acting in accordance with the advice which he had received, and which harmonized so exactly with his own wish to separate himself as fully as possible from

those with whom he was charged, when he was asked to plead, he requested to be tried alone. He had, he said, reasons which he hoped would be apparent before the end of the proceedings, and which would justify his demand. The leading counsel for the prosecution urged that such a course would be productive of needless expenditure of time and trouble ; that as the offence was really one, a separate trial would involve a superfluous traversing of the same ground a second time, with other considerations of a like nature. But Hiram was resolute, and as he was clearly within his right if he thought fit to insist upon it, he received the assent of the judge, and carried his point.

The case against his *quondam* companions was first taken, Hiram, of course, being removed from the court while it was in progress. As our readers are not specially concerned with these men we need not enter into any detailed account of their trial,

merely recording that the verdict of the jury was given in favour of one—Henry Perks—who was arrested by the police when the crowd dispersed upon the appearance of Mr. Wharton, but who was not proved to have taken any part in the proceedings—and against the rest ; that Potter was sentenced to be imprisoned for two years, Howarth for one year, and Cagill and Simpson for three months each.

The case against Hiram was opened by Serjeant Crichley—a tall, sharp-featured man, of severe aspect. He began by pointing out that this case was, in its leading outlines, the same as the one already disposed of ; and he wished the jury to bear this fact in mind. The prisoner at the bar was charged with an offence of the most serious character ; and he ventured to think that the evidence which he should produce would leave no doubt on their minds as to the verdict which they ought to pronounce. Mr. Champley

would speak as to the assault upon his house and the destruction of his property, in which it was alleged the prisoner had taken part. He believed that it would not be denied that the prisoner was among the crowd, and that he made more than one attempt during the day to address the men who took part in the work of destruction. It appeared that he was a member of the local Chartist committee, and he would therefore exercise a considerable amount of influence upon the rank-and-file of the party. The chief question for them to determine was how that influence—an influence which was a sacred trust, and which ought only to have been employed to restrain and moderate the actions of men of less intelligence and force of will than himself—was actually employed. Witnesses would be called to prove, however, that prior to the movement upon Springside, while the crowd were halting in front of the mill, he spoke to the people, pointing out to

them what he considered the folly of being content with simply frightening the persons against whom this demonstration was directed, and intimating—in guarded language, it was true, but still in language upon which his auditors would be able to put one construction only—that they might be engaged in a way far more satisfactory in view of their lawless purposes.

Up to this point Hiram had listened quietly ; but he was unable to control himself when he heard this ingenious perversion of the words he had actually uttered.

“That’s not true, my lord,” he cried, addressing the judge. “What I really said——”

“You must not interrupt, sir,” said the judge, sternly. “You will have an opportunity, when the witnesses are in the box, of cross-examining them with reference to the statements they will make, and the further opportunity of giving your own

interpretation of the matter when you address the jury."

Hiram was silenced, and Mr. Serjeant Crichley continued his speech.

He could, he said, excuse the prisoner's indiscreet interposition, but he must perform without fear the very onerous duty which had devolved upon him. If Greg had not wished to participate in the riot which this speech of his had served to foment, his natural course would have been to quit the mob when they left the mill and advanced to Mr. Champley's residence. Instead of taking this course, however, he accompanied the crowd. For a little time he was lost to sight. But when the missiles were being thrown, and an attempt to burn the house seemed imminent, he next appeared in the very centre of the violent and disorderly assembly, and was seen elevated above their heads, addressing them in an excited and inflammatory style. Such were

the chief facts which he should seek to establish ; and if they considered them established, there was but one conclusion at which they could possibly arrive, namely, that this young man had taken an active and criminal share in proceedings which no law-abiding man could view without horror and detestation, and it would be their duty to bring in a verdict of "guilty" against him.

The first witness called after Mr. Champley had given his evidence was one of the workmen from Springside Mill, named Sykes. He deposed that he left the mill with the rest, when the Chartists appeared, and hung about to see what would happen. Was standing near to Greg when he shouted "halt," and the crowd paused as if he were a person of authority among them. Then heard him say, in a very fierce manner, "don't waste your time frightenin' fowk, that's only children's work when yo' might do

something more satisfactory." The prisoner then slipped, the crowd shouted and began to move away.

"Did I call on the people to halt?" asked Hiram, when the junior counsel, after eliciting this testimony, resumed his seat.

"Ay, yo' know yo' did," replied the witness, with some asperity.

"Was 'halt' the word I used?"

"Ay, I think so."

"Will you swear that I said 'halt'?"

"Yo' said 'halt,' or 'stop,' or some short word o' that soart."

"Will you swear the word wasn't 'hold'?"

"Neaw; I'm not really sure as to th' word; but yo' tell't 'em to stop, an' they did stop."

"When I began to speak, what were th' first words I said?"

"'Don't waste your time i' frightenin' fowk' were th' first I heard."

"Didn't yo' hear me say 'at they were leavin' their purpose o' drawin' plugs for no good end?"

"Neaw, I didn't hear that."

"Are yo' sure the words you heard were the first I spoke?"

"How can I be sure o' that?"

"Then something might have gone before which would have given a different meanin' to what yo' heard?"

"It might."

"What followed th' words yo've repeated?"

"Why, yo' sprawled on your back."

"But what did I say?"

"I heard naught else."

"Will you swear I said naught else?"

"I tell you I heard naught else. What more can I say?"

Hiram intimated that he had no more questions to ask, and this witness retired.

The next person called upon was another

of the Springside workpeople, and he was followed by a servant from the house. Their testimony was substantially identical, and only amounted to this: that they had seen a person like Hiram standing in the thick of the crowd, upon a pedestal, from which a flower vase had been thrown down almost as soon as the rioters appeared upon the lawn. They agreed in regarding the person in question as a leading spirit among the turbulent people; but neither of them would assert positively that the young man they had noticed was Greg.

Miss Wharton was then put into the box, and the interest of the audience, which had become somewhat languid, began to revive.

She stated how she had gone to the window to try to persuade the people to disperse; how, notwithstanding his disordered appearance, and the blood upon his face, she had recognized Hiram, whom she had

seen previously ; and how she received the impression that he was encouraging the crowd in their violent conduct.

“Excuse me,” said Hiram, when she was about to leave the witness-box, “but I must ask you a few questions.”

It was noticeable that in addressing her, as afterwards in addressing the jury, Hiram in a great measure dropped the dialect which he had been in the habit of using. Latterly, indeed, chiefly through the influence exercised upon him by Mr. Stapleton, he had paid some attention to this matter; and had become desirous of purifying his speech from the provincialisms which had become almost a second nature. In converse with his Millvale friends, however, he had continued to use those forms of speech which came most readily both to him and them, and which, in converse with them, it would have seemed almost affectation to discontinue.

Miss Wharton inclined her head and looked at him steadily.

"You were excited when you opened th' window?" he said, interrogatively.

"Certainly."

"Frightened on account of what you thought the people would do?"

"Apprehensive—not frightened."

"Well, ther's not much difference. As soon as you saw me you jumped to the conclusion that I was trying to encourage the people in what they were doing."

"I did."

"Did you see me do aught to help 'em?"

"Nothing more than I have already stated."

"Did you hear me say aught?"

"I heard your voice; but I did not catch what you said. The uproar was so great, and I was thinking of something else at the time."

"You did not catch a single word?"

"Not one."

"Then you judged from my behaviour only?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think I might have been trying to persuade the people to go quietly away?"

"What the witness thinks is not the point," remarked the judge. "The only question is what she saw or heard. The jury will put their own construction upon the facts."

"Then I have nothing more to ask," said Hiram; and Miss Wharton withdrew, and rejoined her father and Alexander Henderson, who occupied seats in the portion of the court reserved for the use of solicitors.

As the strangeness of his position had worn off, and Hiram had become used to the gaze of the spectators, whose interest centred in himself, he had grown more cool and self-possessed. Great as was the strain

of his suspense and anxiety he felt some degree of exhilaration now that he was in the thick of his struggle for liberty and for his fair name. His course appeared very clear and straight ; and he saw no difficulty in the way with which he did not feel competent to grapple. Mr. Stapleton was as near him as possible, and he felt supported and strengthened by the good minister's presence.

When Miss Wharton left the box, and Mr. Serjeant Crichley intimated that her evidence concluded the case for the prosecution, the spectators were seized with the cough which seems inevitable on such occasions ; the barristers settled themselves comfortably in their seats, and several of them put up their eye-glasses as they listened with some curiosity for the address of the prisoner ; the jury leaned forward in their box ; and the judge, after wiping his spectacles and dipping his pen in the ink,

gravely bid Hiram proceed with any remarks which he might think it necessary to make, and Hiram, in low measured tones, began his speech in his own defence.

“My lord, and gentlemen of the jury,—I am charged here to-day with a crime which I hate from the bottom of my heart. I did my best, though that did not amount to much, to hinder it from being committed, and I trust I shall be able to convince you, as fair-minded men, that I ought never to have been placed in the position in which I now stand. I have claimed to be tried separately from the men with whom I was indicted, and I must tell you, in a few words, what were my reasons for takin’ this course. I am a Chartist, and they are Chartists; but it doesn’t follow that we are altogether in the same boat, or that we’ve allus pulled together. Some of ’em, at least, believed i’ measures in which I had no faith. They thought it reet to turn out the workpeople.

I thought it not only foolish, but dangerous. I've done my utmost to oppose this scheme, knowin' 'at it 'd bring trouble to them 'at engaged in it, an' danger to them again' whom the'r minds were set. I mixed with 'em, it's true, both before an' on th' day of this riot; but I mixed with 'em to try if I couldn't persuade 'em to use only lawful an' peaceable means. Seein' th' misery o' th' workin' folk, seein' 'em starvin' for want o' bread, seein' 'em deprived o' rights which I thought they might wi' justice claim, I were, I am, a Chartist. But I never believed in, an' I never advocated, physical force. Therefore, I didn't wish to be tried wi' men of a different way o' thinkin', whether they were guilty or innocent of th' charge brought against 'em. Now, as to what is supposed to be th' evidence again' me. Leaving Mr. Champley aside, th' first real witness against me tell't you what he heard me say near to th' mill, though he couldn't

swear to the very first word he heard me speak. It's unfortunate for me that he only heard part o' what I said, an' 'at he's given a few words which seem evil or good accordin' to th' point o' view from which you look at 'em. I've heard a story of a man 'at maintained 'at th' Bible teaches atheism, an' in support of his position quoted the Psalmist's words, 'There is no God.' He didn't know, or didn't think it necessary to mention, that the Psalmist had written that it was only the fool that had said this in his heart. Well, this shows how false to a man's true meaning his words may be when they're dragged away from what went before an' followed after. I'm not here to deny a single word that I really said, an' I'm ready to admit th' words which Sykes repeated. But in all honesty an' truth, I used 'em in tryin' to persuade the folk to give up the'r intention to go to Mr. Champley's house, as any man would see

clearly enough if he had heard a single word more than them 'at have been picked out. If this were not the case, why should I be thrown down by some o' the men who were anxious that I shouldn't be heard? Let me press it on your attention, gentlemen, that these words were no instigation to lawless behaviour, that standing by themselves, that is but one of two constructions which might be put upon them, and that you must look for their right meanin' beyond th' words themselves. As to th' rest of the evidence, I think you'll see that it's very wide of th' mark. What does it amount to? It amounts to this: I was seen among th' crowd; I was seen speakin' in an excited manner while they were doin' the'r work. Knowin' as I do what my own feelin's were, I cannot but be angry to be brought here an' charged with such a serious offence on such a thin an' paltry ground. I admit every statement 'at these witnesses have made.

I've no desire to deny the truth, an' it's true 'at I was there an' spoke. I was excited, too. Wouldn't you be excited if you saw men for whom you had a fellow-feelin' rushing blindly upo' their own destruction; men with whom you'd worked in a common cause doing what you believed to be most ruinous to that cause? You can't at such a time stop to measure your acts, or to think o' what may be made on 'em afterwards. I was excited, an' I spoke hotly; but excitement is no crime. If it were," continued Hiram, pointing to the barristers, "some o' these gentlemen would deserve to be indicted every time their hearts are warmed with the thought 'at they're defending an innocent man."

This caused a laugh and some slight applause, which was at once checked.

"I've not much more to say," Hiram proceeded, "an' I shall not waste your time by calling many witnesses. I can do

naught with regard to what took place on the lawn. The uproar was so great that I don't think anybody took notice of what I said. Nothing has been repeated here against me. It was in vain I tried to make the people hear. If I'd succeeded, a new face might ha' been put on the whole concern. I shall call one person, who has no political connection with me or any other Chartist, who will tell you more about that speech in front o'th' mill ; an' Mr. Stapleton will say how I acted up to th' time of this disturbance takin' place. He will confirm what I have said as to my efforts to persuade the people to have naught to do with this 'sacred month,' an' will bear witness how, up to the very moment that he left me, I was dead set again' all lawlessness an' violence. After that you'll scarcely be brought to believe that I could take the side I'm said to have taken. It may be replied that what I had said an' done at

one time is no guarantee for the next. But you'll hardly be persuaded 'at a man wi' sense enough to be responsible for his actions would go completely again' his firm an' steady convictions, even in a moment of excitement. At any rate, it'll want better evidence than any before you to convince you that I did so. Now, gentlemen, I've done. I ask for justice—for nothing more an' for nothing less. Some of you may think my political opinions mistaken—some may think 'em dangerous. But I ask you to let your love of right and your regard for truth outweigh any such objections. I am not on my trial for being a Chartist, but for takin' part in a riot, and no right-minded man will let his disapproval of my political creed influence him when he is called upon to judge of my conduct. I ask for justice, and for justice only. I do not appeal to your pity, or I might urge that I have a widowed mother who has depended upon me

for support, and that my conviction would fall more heavily upon her than upon myself. But I ask only for justice—that I may not be branded as a felon ; that I may not be made liable to a degrading punishment because, out of regard for my fellow-men, I sought to prevent a wrong which is now falsely and wrongfully laid to my charge.”

Hiram ceased, and the people in court again applauded.

“ Good—very good ! ” whispered Mr. Stapleton. “ Nothing could have been better.”

“ Silence ! ” proclaimed the ushers.

“ If such manifestations of feeling are repeated,” said the judge, “ I shall order the court to be cleared.”

“ Oh, papa, suppose I should have been mistaken, after all ? ” Charlotte whispered. Throughout the address to which she had just listened the fear that such might have been the case had grown upon her, and

its conclusion, uttered in deep and solemn tones, had especially wrought upon her mind.

"Shall we go? I think we had better. Yes?—yes," said Mr. Wharton.

"No, I cannot go yet; I must stay for the end," replied Charlotte, in distress.

In reply to a call for Samuel Taylor a little, elderly man mounted the witness-box, and the people settled down again into quiet attention.

"Are you a Chartist?" Hiram asked.

"Not me!" said the little man, emphatically, blinking his eyes rapidly, as if the light were too strong for them.

"You have no sympathy with either the physical-force party or the moral-force party?"

"They're a' foo's—some bigger foo's nor th' others."

"You've never been a member of any Chartist committee or association?"

"I've more sense. Richard Cobden and John Bright for me!"

"You're a weaver at Mr. Champley's?"

"Ay."

"Did you see me on the day of the riot?"

"Ay, I saw thi, lad."

"Just be good enough to tell the jury what you saw and heard."

"Why, tha sees, lad——"

"Address the jury," said the judge.

"A' reet," returned Taylor, coolly, blinking at his lordship. "Yo' see, I comed wi' th' ruck eaut o' th' mill when th' plugs were drawn——"

"With what?" asked the judge.

"Wi' th' ruck—wi' th' rest o' th' fowk. Don't yo' understond th' English land-gwidge?"

The audience laughed, and the judge, frowning heavily, said, "Go on, sir."

"Well, when I gat deawn into th' road, yo' see, ther' were a gradely mob o' fowk,

and I heerd someb'dy say they were goin' a lookin' at owd Champley. They meant th' measter—him 'at's sittin' theer."

The people laughed again, as the old man pointed at Mr. Champley sitting by Mr. Wharton.

"Then," continued Taylor, blinking his eyes in evident enjoyment, "I heerd this young fellah sing eaut 'hold!'" This last word was uttered in a tone intended as an imitation of Hiram's, and with a theatrical gesture at which even the judge could not refrain from smiling. "He then axed 'em to listen to a bit o' reason, as if he thought they were a lot o' foo's, an' needed a warnin'."

"Never mind what I appeared to think," said Hiram, "but just repeat the words you heard me say."

"Tha should ha' been a lawyer," retorted Taylor, with mock admiration. "Tha'rt too sharp for aught else."

"Repeat what you heard the prisoner say," commanded the judge, sternly.

"Well, he said, 'listen to a bit o' reason.'"

"So you told us," said the judge, sharply.

"Go on, sir."

"It's true, too," said Taylor, blinking his eyes more than ever. "When he'd said that he tell't 'em they'd banded together for one purpose, an' were leaving it for no good end. He said there were work enow at th' mills wi'out goin' to onybody's heause, an' 'at if they were bent upo' drawin' th' plugs they mut do it quietly an' quickly, and not waste time i' frightenin' fowk. Then he tumbled, an' that's a'."

Mr. Serjeant Crichley rose with an important air to cross-examine the witness.

"I wish to have a word or two with you, Mr. Taylor," he began.

"I'st be ple'sed to talk to such a amiable-lookin' gentleman," retorted the little man.

“ You say,” began the serjeant, “ that you are not a Chartist ? ”

“ I’d as soon be a lawyer in a powdered wig.”

“ Now, sir,” said the serjeant, colouring and speaking testily, “ how near were you to Greg when he made the speech of which you have told us ? ”

“ Well, though I’m Taylor by name I’m noan tailor by trade, so I didn’t have a yard stick abeaut me, an’ cannot reetly say to a inch.”

The spectators tittered ; the witness calmly blinked his eyes ; and the serjeant said, angrily, “ Will you answer my question, sir ? ”

“ Happen six yards, happen eight.”

“ And the people round about were making a noise while he spoke ? ”

“ Part o’ th’ time.”

“ Yet you pretend to have heard all that he said ? ”

“ I heard what I’ve tell’t.”

“ Have you a good memory ? ”

“ Middlin’. I mind some things an’ forget others.”

“ Then you may have forgotten some things which the prisoner said ? ”

“ That’s as likely as ’at yo’re talkin’ wi’ out wage.”

“ Are you sure the words you have repeated were the words used by the prisoner ? ”

“ They’re as like his as one pea’s like another.”

“ Are they the exact words ? ”

“ Well, as to that—— ”

“ Answer the question—yes or no.”

“ They gie th’ sense o’ what he said.”

“ But you won’t swear that they were his exact words ? ”

“ I couldn’t be reetly sure to ivvery word. But they gie th’ sense.”

Taylor retired, and Mr. Stapleton took

his place, repeating the statement which he had made before the magistrates. This concluded Hiram's defence ; and Mr. Serjeant Crichley rose to reply.

He insisted upon the fact that Hiram, an acknowledged Chartist, was present and took a prominent part in the proceedings on the occasion in question. He pointed out that Taylor, though admitting that his memory was not thoroughly reliable, remembered the words spoken in front of the mill previously testified to by the witness Sykes ; and that as to the qualifying words upon which the prisoner had insisted, they had no satisfactory evidence. With regard to the statement of Mr. Stapleton, he submitted that it was more likely that the prisoner had played a part with the minister than that he had attempted to oppose his political friends as he had—should he say impudently ?—tried to persuade the jury.

Anyhow, what he had said and done prior to this particular time were beside the mark, and they must not let these things influence them in coming to their decision. After elaborating these and one or two minor points, the learned gentleman concluded with the customary complimentary references to the intelligence and moral uprightness of the jury, and resumed his seat.

The judge then gravely and slowly summed up the case, without shedding any additional light upon it, and the jury consulted for a few minutes without leaving their box. Resuming their seats, the foreman stood up. In answer to the usual questions, he announced that they were agreed upon their verdict, and their verdict was—Guilty!

Hiram heard this word, and the sentence of three months' imprisonment, apparently unmoved.

“Give my love to Helen and to my mother—and God bless you, sir,” he said quietly, shaking hands with Mr. Stapleton.

Then he was removed.

END OF VOL. I.





